PATTERNS OF POWER

Italian Somalia

The Complete Study

1889 · 1905 · 1941

Thomas J. Bryan

with Claude/Anthropic

Held as tested, not revealed.

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PREFACE

Preface and Outline

What the study is for, how it was built, and the discipline it holds

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The spine

Every other conquest in this series can name the day the floor went down. Algiers fell in three weeks. Hastings settled England in an afternoon. This one has no such day, and the absence is where it begins.

Italy did not take Somalia. It acquired it in instalments across thirty-eight years — beginning in February 1889 with a salary of twelve hundred Maria Theresa thalers paid to a sultan, and ending in February 1927 with a naval blockade of the Horn — and in between it bought, leased, sub-let, abandoned, repurchased and finally conquered a country it had coloured on the map a generation before it could stand anywhere in the interior without an artillery escort. It did this because it could not afford to do anything else. It was the poorest of the powers, a kingdom not thirty years old whose own capital was disputed by a Pope who had forbidden its Catholics to vote, and its colonial policy was the policy of a state that had to buy what others took.

That poverty is what makes the case worth building, because it strips the machinery down to the parts that carry the load. A rich empire's instruments look like choices. A poor one's look like what they are.

Three things follow, and they are the spine of what comes after.

The first is that a conqueror who cannot lay a floor buys a receipt. Italy purchased title from a sultan at Zanzibar whose own claim the powers had measured in 1886 and found to stop at four town walls, and leased it for a hundred and sixty thousand rupees a year. Crispi told the Chamber of Deputies in 1889 that the protectorate of Obbia had cost neither a cent nor a soldier, and he was exactly right about the treaty and wholly wrong about the country. But the treaty generated a rent, a ceremony, a governor, a

budget line and a colour on the map, and the unheld interior generated nothing at all — so the metropole's picture of its own conquest was formed by the instrument rather than by the ground, before anyone had decided to conceal anything.

The second is that the robe was cut for a jury of powers who published their own inspection criteria. Italy's title to administer African territory was bought with abolitionism, because that was the only coin the counter would take, and the General Act of Brussels of 1890 came with a filing schedule: laws communicated annually to a special office, statistics on slaves detained and liberated, an analytical table circulated to seventeen states. Italy joined that regime and three more like it over the following forty-four years, and answered all of them accurately. It did not conceal. It complied — and it complied by moving the coercion out of the category the auditors had named. Brussels watched the buying and selling of persons, so Italy prohibited the buying and selling of persons in 1903 and freed thirteen years of children. Geneva and the International Labour Organisation watched compulsion to labour, so the compulsion was applied to residence and the labour followed from the residence. A compliance regime specifies, in the same breath as the offence, the conduct that is not the offence.

The third is that after fifty years the surplus was not coming out of Somalia at all. The colony exported forty-five quintals of bananas in 1927 and cost the Italian taxpayer a hundred and ten million lire in 1926. It never paid for itself. Its principal crop could be sold only inside a monopoly created in 1935 to close the Italian market against competitors. What was taken from Somalis — the land, the water, the labour, the legal capacity to own — was taken as the input a transfer required, and the transfer ran from Italian taxpayers and Italian consumers to some hundred and fifty concessionaires, a shipping interest and a monopoly board. The dispossession was complete, the coercion was real, and the enterprise lost money for half a century, because the money was never going to come out of the crop.

How it was built

One module at a time, verification first, over the arc the series sets: a landscape and twelve modules, each with a function, each returning a refinement rather than merely applying a template.

Public-domain primary sources are quoted exactly, in the original with a translation, at the length the argument needs — the treaties of 1889, the Zanzibar concession of 1892, the Filonardi Company's regulation of 1895, the abolition ordinance of 1903, the parliamentary record, the Brussels Act. The single most productive source was Carlo Rossetti's *Manuale di legislazione della Somalia italiana* (Rome, Ministry of Colonies, 1912), an official compilation whose own prefatory note turned out to carry the sharpest finding about the robe. Modern copyrighted scholarship is paraphrased and credited. Contested figures are given as ranges and marked as the conqueror's arithmetic where that is what they are, which is almost everywhere.

Where the account rests on unread sources, it says so on the face of the module. Five works that would have changed it were not consulted directly: Cassanelli on the ending of slavery in Italian Somalia, the foundational text, used at third hand; Podestà on colonial economics; Urbano's article in full; Mancuso on colonial law; and Eno on plantation slavery in the south. No wage rates, labour-force totals or enrolment figures were obtained, so the extraction module can show the mechanism and cannot price the labour. And every casualty figure but one was written by an Italian, for the reason the formation module establishes and the grim accounting enters as a line rather than a limitation.

Two working predictions were broken along the way, and the breaks are left visible rather than smoothed over. The starting expectation held that Italy found a slave-plantation order in the river valleys, abolished it in its robe, and reconstituted it in its practice. The landscape looked and found the servitude but no plantation, and built on that a claim that Italy constructed the estate the prior order's own land rules had prevented. That correction in turn failed against the scholarship as the modules proceeded. The landscape stands unrevised, with its error intact and the corrections arriving where they were found, because an opening quietly amended to match its own conclusion is no longer testing anything. The formulation that survives is narrower, and it is stated at the close: Italy did not create servile agriculture in those valleys; it abolished the legal form that production had taken, dispossessed the lineages that had controlled it, and reconstituted it under Italian title with the compulsion moved from ownership to residence.

The discipline

Legibility is not pardon.

Italy suppressed a slave trade on that coast and the suppression was real; men and women were freed and the freeing was recorded. The abolitionists who forced it were sincere, and the sincerity is the mechanism, not the defence. The engineers who threw a barrage across the Shebelle in twenty-five months were proud of it and had reason to be. The missionary teachers who wrote respectful references to Islam into their syllabuses in order to keep their pupils were not cynics. And alone among the defeated empires of the Second World War, Italy went back under international supervision and handed over an independent state on the appointed day.

All of that is set down because it is the mechanism, and because an account that cannot credit what an order actually did has stopped measuring anything, while one that swallows the order's account of itself has stopped being an account at all.

Both columns stand. Neither cancels the other. Carrying both at once is the whole of the method.

The arithmetic is laid out. The sum is left to the reader.

The arc

Landscape · The Abbaan and the Applicant. The ground before the flag — a coast where a stranger could buy nothing except through a host who owned his stretch of the road, a merchant empire whose revenue had been slaves and which was being made to give them up, and a fifty-year-old kingdom applying for a seat at a table whose entrance fee had lately been written down and signed.

1 · Neither a Cent nor a Soldier. *The floor of force.* Thirty-eight years, four foundings, sixty-three armed men at the start and sixteen thousand five hundred confiscated rifles at the end — and a receipt that behaved, in Rome's records, exactly as control would.

2 · No Ascertained Owner. *The settlement.* Twenty-four words written by a trading company in 1895, which nobody needed for twenty-five years and which then covered everything a Fascist state wanted to take.

3 · Printed Here for the First Time. *The robe.* Of the whole law of the colony from 1892 to 1908, one category of document had a foreign readership. Everything else was posted on a wall.

4 · A Perfectly Italian Education. *Formation.* Italian law named the qualification for admission in those words in 1933 — and the schools stopped at the third year, and by 1940 the qualification had become descent.

5 · The Force to Make Them Observed. *The cost column.* A governor who could not enforce a hunting licence in 1900, and guards standing over paid workers in a banana field thirty years later. The demand set the height, and only one side moved.

6 · Forty-Five Quintals. *Extraction.* The customs on somebody else's trade, monopolies on coin and salt and fruit, a river taken at the barrage — and the discovery that the surplus came from Rome.

7 · Prisoners of the Sun. *Information and suppression.* Four international reporting regimes, all answered; one concealment, about poison gas; and the single book the censor stopped, which was about Italians.

8 · One Purse. *Elite coordination and the default.* Every link in the chain benefited, and it was still not a default — because a default fractures at a seam and a payroll evaporates all at once.

9 · The Levers Were in Rome. *Plurality or foreclosure.* One deposit in fifty-two years, won by Italians for Somalis who could not keep it; and a foreclosure accomplished in Italy in 1926 without a single act in Africa.

10 · Dispersed in the Bush. *Change and collapse.* Five weeks. The crack was in the Western Desert, and the apparatus did not fracture — it went home.

11 · Starvation and Scurvy. *The grim accounting.* The one mass death anybody counted, the column of what nobody counted, and the note that fell due fifty years late on exactly the people the settlement had dispossessed.

12 · On the Appointed Day. *Convergence and divergence.* What the case shares, where it genuinely differs, what it returns to the pattern — and the strongest case for the whole enterprise, stated at full strength with the arithmetic set beside it.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

LANDSCAPE

THE ABBAAN AND THE APPLICANT

The ground before the flag — a coast where a stranger could buy nothing except through a host who owned his stretch of the road, a merchant empire whose revenue had been slaves and which was being made to give them up, and a fifty-year-old kingdom applying for a seat at a table whose entrance fee had lately been written down and signed.

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Three parties and a jury

A conquest performed upon empty scenery is not a conquest but a founding myth, and what the conqueror finds already standing decides most of what he can afford to do next. Here the ground has to be reconstructed three times rather than twice, and there is a fourth party in the room who never sets foot on the coast and whose presence organises the whole affair.

The first party is Somali: a society of camel- and cattle-keeping lineages spread across the arid interior, holding a faith that had arrived by sea six hundred years before and had long since stopped being anything a Somali could experience as foreign, and organised — this is the fact that will cost Italy the most money — without any permanent seat of authority a stranger could occupy, buy, or depose. The second is Omani: a maritime commercial empire ruled from Zanzibar which claimed the Somali ports, taxed what passed through them, and had built its own fortune on a traffic in human beings that the British navy had spent seventy years closing down. The third is Italian: a kingdom not yet thirty years old, poorer than any of the powers it wished to be counted among, its own capital held against the will of a Pope who instructed its Catholics not to vote in its elections, and whose government in these years was trying to acquire an empire on a budget that would not stretch to one.

The fourth party is the jury. By 1889 the European powers had begun writing down, in signed instruments, the terms on which a state might be recognised as legitimately administering African territory — and the chief of those terms was the suppression of the slave trade. That was not a sentiment. It was a schedule of undertakings, with a bureau, an annual exchange of statistics, and a clause making a signatory answerable for the conduct of any company to which it delegated the work. Italy signed. What it bought with that signature, and what the signature obliged it to, is the hinge on which everything turns, and it is set out at the end of this opening because it cannot be understood until the ground is in view.

A conquest you can date by its inscriptions

Begin where the record is hardest, which is in stone.

In the Hamar Weyne quarter of Mogadishu the Friday mosque carries in its mihrab an inscription dated 1238, naming Kalulah b. Muhammad b. 'Abd al-'Aziz. Thirty years later two more mosques went up in the same town: the mosque of Arba'a Rukun in the Shangani quarter, whose mihrab inscription of 667 AH — 1268 or 1269 — commemorates its founder Khusraw b. Muhammad al-Shirazi, and the mosque of Fakhr al-Din, dated by inscription to 1269 and attributed to the sultan whose name it bears. Some two dozen dated inscriptions survive from Mogadishu between roughly 1200 and 1365; of those that can be read whole, the great majority carry names of Arabian origin — al-Khazraji from the Hijaz, al-Hadrami from Hadramawt, al-Madani from Medina — with only a pair pointing to the Persian Gulf.

Set beside those stones the Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta, who came ashore at Mogadishu in 1331 and found a large and wealthy town whose sultan, Abu Bakr ibn Shaykh 'Umar, was called Shaykh by his subjects, was of the people the Arab geographers called Barbar — that is, Somali — and spoke the local tongue and Arabic with equal ease. A qadi received the traveller; the sultan's household ran to ministers, jurists and commanders. This is a hundred years after the first dated mihrab and six hundred before the Italians, and already the picture is not of an Arab enclave among heathens but of a Somali ruler ruling Somalis inside an Islamic frame that nobody present appears to have thought of as an import.

That frame was laid over something older. Beneath it ran a Cushitic pastoral world of camel-keeping and clan genealogy whose forms Islam absorbed rather than erased — which is why Somali lineages would eventually trace themselves, in their own reckoning, back through the Prophet's kin, so that the genealogy of the herdsman and the genealogy of the faith became a single line. By the nineteenth century no living person on that coast experienced the Qur'an, the fasts, the prayers, the qadi's judgment or the reverence owed a shaykh as a thing that had once been brought and installed. It was simply the shape of the world, held up by the conviction of the people themselves at almost no cost to anybody, and defended as men defend the edge of reality rather than as they defend a policy.

Saying that this world began as somebody else's conquest is not a way of taking it away from the Somalis. It is the opposite. A thing that was built and then became genuinely real is more durable than any lie could be, and by 1889 the Islamic order of the Somali coast and interior was as authentically Somali as anything can be. But it is worth the dating, because the contrast that matters most is between an order that had taken so completely it needed no policing and an order about to be laid over it that would never take at all, and would spend fifty years paying for the difference.

Authority as contract, not throne

Now the fact that mattered most to the men in Rome, and which they took twenty years to understand.

Away from the walled towns, Somali society had no permanent apex. Descent was reckoned patrilineally through a small number of very large clan families — Dir, Isaaq, Darod, Hawiye, and, among the cultivating and agro-pastoral people between the rivers, the Digil and Mirifle who are together called Rahanweyn — each segmenting downward into clans, sub-clans and lineages. But the unit that actually did the political work was not any level of that genealogy. It was the diya-paying group, the body of kinsmen bound to pay and receive blood compensation for one another, and it was constituted by an explicit agreement between lineages — *xeer*, an unwritten body of customary law, negotiated, adjusted, and enforced by councils of elders holding no office and serving no term. Authority was a contract, not a chair.

The consequences of that for anyone arriving from outside were immediate and expensive. There was no throne to take, because there was no throne. There was no tax

machine to capture, because collection ran as duties, gifts and shares levied by whoever controlled the ground you happened to be standing on. And there was no single man whose word could deliver a district, because the man whose word bound a district this month bound it by an agreement that could be renegotiated next month by the same elders who had made it.

The institution that shows this most cleanly is the one from which this opening takes its name. A merchant moving goods through Somali country did not travel under any state's protection, because there was no state; he travelled under the protection of an *abbaan*, a host and patron drawn from a respected lineage of the clan controlling that particular stretch of route, who lodged him, guaranteed his safety, oversaw and validated his transactions, negotiated the duties the local elders expected, spoke for him in disputes, and took a share of the business for doing it — a share the sources put somewhere between a twentieth and a quarter. The arrangement was not a courtesy the traveller might decline. Without an abbaan a stranger could not lawfully trade at all, and a sale concluded behind the host's back was simply void. Ibn Battuta had watched an early form of it in Mogadishu in 1331: the small boats coming out to a newly anchored ship, each with a dish of food, each merchant on board claimed by a host who thereafter bought and sold on his behalf.

Read that as a diagram of the country and it tells you everything. Protection was purchasable, real, and strictly local. It did not scale, it could not be bought once, and it had to be bought again from a different man at the next lineage boundary. Alongside the abbaans there were clerical lineages — the Reer Mumin, strung along the road from Mogadishu to Luuq — whose men could travel the whole route unmolested, blessing caravans and arbitrating commercial quarrels for a fee, so that the one authority which did run the length of the country ran through holy men rather than through any government.

The exceptions to this were real and they will matter. Down to the seventeenth century a state called Ajuran had held much of the south and had organised the trade the later caravans revived; its collapse left the pattern of dispersed authority the nineteenth century inherited. In the late eighteenth century the Gobroon lineage of the Geledi clan built a kingdom at Afgooye which, after mobilising a coalition that broke the militant clerical movement based at Bardheere in 1843, presided loosely over the routes behind Mogadishu and Brava — though it was itself defeated by the Biimaal in 1848 and again in 1878, and by the 1880s its authority had thinned badly. And on the northern coast two

sultanates did have seizable apexes: the Majeerteen sultanate under Boqor Osman Mahamuud, and the sultanate of Hobyo, which Yusuf Ali Kenadid had carved out of it in the 1870s with a band of Hadrami musketeers after losing a five-year war against his own cousin and spending a decade in exile in Arabia.

That is the shape Italy would eventually find: two thrones in the north that could be leased and later broken, a fading kingdom in the south, and, in between and underneath, several hundred miles of country in which the answer to *whom do I deal with* was *a different man every hundred miles, and only while you are standing on his ground.*

Servitude in the valleys — and the plantation that was not there

The two rivers change the picture.

The Shebelle runs parallel to the Benadir coast for some two hundred miles before turning south towards the Juba, and the plain it waters is the only substantial farmland in the country. Through the nineteenth century that plain filled up. Semi-sedentarised pastoral clans — Biimaal, Geledi and others — moved down into it as the coastal trade grew, and built a hybrid arrangement in which clan elders allocated and defended the land, lineages divided it and settled disputes among themselves, and clansmen farmed alongside dependent cultivators whose position derived from an older pastoral custom, *sheegad*, by which a weaker group grazed on a stronger group's land as its clients.

Into that arrangement flowed unfree people, from two directions. Most came from close at hand: captives of clan wars and of the long fighting between Somali and Oromo groups on the inland frontier, some sent to the coastal towns as domestic servants, many retained in the valley among the cultivators. A smaller but conspicuous stream came by sea from Zanzibar — Bantu-speaking people taken from what is now Tanzania, northern Mozambique and Malawi, and sold up the coast; the numbers are contested, running at perhaps six hundred a year in the 1840s, rising through the 1860s and collapsing by the late 1880s, with total estimates for the whole century usually given somewhere between twenty-five and fifty thousand. Escapees began forming their own free settlements along the lower Juba from the 1840s, in the district called Gosha, where they elected their own headmen and farmed for subsistence and for sale.

What that labour produced is on the record. By the mid-century the grain of the Benadir hinterland was feeding the coasts of Hadramawt and Oman; one visitor in the 1840s put the annual millet export from Mogadishu in the low thousands of tons, with some tens of tons of sesame beside it. By 1896 the figures had grown to something over five thousand seven hundred tons of millet, worth about a hundred and twenty-five thousand Maria Theresa dollars, and a further three hundred and sixty-eight tons of sesame worth around twenty-two thousand.

So there was servitude in those valleys, and there was export agriculture, and both were long established before any Italian saw the river. But there was no plantation system, and there was a specific reason there was not. Land in the valley was not a commodity. It was allocated by clan elders to clansmen, and their control of that allocation meant that no merchant, however rich, could assemble an estate; the men who bought captives at the coast mostly dispersed them into the internal exchange, trading them onward for cattle, which was the real store of wealth among the pastoral clans. Foreign agriculturalists were kept out of the immediate hinterland altogether. The prohibition was not a moral one — the same society bought and held slaves — but it produced, as a by-product of a land rule made for quite other reasons, a country in which the concentrated coerced-labour estate simply could not form.

That distinction is worth holding, because it turns out to be the whole difference between what Italy found and what Italy built. What Italy found was servile labour without plantations, held that way by a land regime that made plantations impossible. What Italy would eventually build was the estate that regime had blocked. That is a harder thing to describe than a reconstitution, and it is a different accusation — one that has to be earned river by river rather than assumed at the outset.

The overlord who called himself a merchant

Above the coast, and thinner than it looked from Europe, lay Zanzibar.

The Omani ruler Sa'id bin Sultan moved his court from Muscat to Zanzibar around 1840, having some years earlier introduced the clove, and built on the island and on Pemba a plantation economy worked by imported slaves, at the head of a commercial network reaching from the Gulf to the Mrima coast. He described himself, without false

modesty, as nothing but a merchant. Nineteenth-century Zanzibar exported ivory, cloves and human beings, and its wealth rested on all three.

The British spent seventy years dismantling the third. By the Moresby treaty of 1822 Sa'id undertook not to sell slaves to the subjects of Christian powers; by the Hamerton agreement negotiated in 1845 and effective from 1847 the traffic was in theory confined to his own African dominions; and in 1873 Sir Bartle Frere's mission extracted from Sultan Barghash a treaty prohibiting the seaborne slave trade outright and closing the great market in Stone Town. Domestic slavery on the islands survived all of it and went on growing. But the direction of travel was unmistakable, and its meaning for a latecomer was plain: the East African slave trade was the standing scandal by which European opinion judged this coast, and Britain had spent a great deal of money and a great many ships establishing that it would judge others by it.

Zanzibar's hold on the Somali ports was of a different order from its hold on the islands. It had built or garrisoned forts at Merca, Mogadishu and Brava between the 1860s and the 1880s, and it drew customs; but its writ stopped where the town ended. The hinterland belonged to the clans, and as the valley's grain exports grew, the pastoral clans' leverage over the coastal towns grew with them. By 1890 the sultanate had been reduced, on paper, to Zanzibar and Pemba, some islets, a nominal sovereignty over a ten-mile strip of the British East African coast, and the nominal possession of five ports on the Benadir. In June of that year the Sultan was obliged to accept a British protectorate over what remained.

Hold that arrangement in view, because it is genuinely strange. The ports Italy would take were leased from a sultan who was himself under British protection, who was himself a signatory of the anti-slavery instrument about to be described, and whose dynasty's fortune had been made in the traffic that instrument existed to destroy — and whose actual authority over the ground being leased amounted to a customs post and a fort.

The applicant

Against all that stood the Kingdom of Italy, and the first thing to say about it is that it was not a great power and knew it.

The kingdom had existed since 1861 and had held Rome only since 1870. Its population in 1889 was about thirty-one million; life expectancy stood in the high thirties; a large part

of its people could not read, the proportion far worse in the south than the north, and Italians were leaving by the hundreds of thousands for the Americas, a haemorrhage the Crispi government tried for the first time to regulate by statute at the very end of 1888. Its finances in these years were bad and getting worse: a tariff war with France had wrecked business confidence, and in 1889 a building boom in Rome collapsed, taking three Turin banks with it and throwing tens of thousands of construction workers onto the streets, some of whom rioted in February.

And its legitimacy at home was contested by an authority it could not answer. The Pope, deprived of Rome by the Italian army, would not recognise the kingdom; the ruling of *non expedit* — it is not appropriate — first given in 1868 and hardened after 1870 and again in 1874, instructed Italian Catholics not to take part in the elections of a state whose existence the Holy See denied. Here was a government whose own capital was disputed by the moral authority most of its subjects still obeyed, seeking recognition abroad from powers who regarded it, not unfairly, as a poor relation.

The man running it was Francesco Crispi, prime minister and foreign minister from July 1887, and Crispi wanted an African empire on terms Italy could pay. What Italy could pay for was treaties. In February 1889 the Italian consul at Zanzibar, Vincenzo Filonardi, sailed to Hobyo, where Sultan Yusuf Ali Kenadid — who had asked for the Italian flag partly to escape the reach of the British and partly to strengthen his hand against his cousin in the Majeerteen and against Zanzibar itself — placed his sultanate under Italian protection, in return for which the Italian government undertook an annual payment reported at twelve hundred thalers. In April, Boqor Osman Mahamuud did the same for the Majeerteen. In August, Filonardi was appointed the first Italian commissioner in Somalia; and in May of the same year, on the other side of the Horn, Italy signed with Menelik at Wuchale the treaty whose two texts said different things.

It is worth naming what those Somali agreements actually were. Italy did not conquer the northern sultanates in 1889; it hired them, at a salary, and the sultans took the salary in order to pursue their own quarrels with each other and with Zanzibar. In the terms the coast itself would have used, the Kingdom of Italy had gone looking for an abbaan — a local man of standing who, for an agreed share, would guarantee a stranger's passage over his own stretch of ground and no further. The arrangement had exactly the properties the abbaan system always had: it was real, it was local, it did not scale, and it lasted only as long as both parties found it worth keeping.

The fee

Now the fourth party, and the instrument.

In February 1885 the powers meeting at Berlin signed a general act which, among much else about the Congo and free trade, bound its signatories — Italy among them — in Article 6 to watch over the preservation of the native tribes and the improvement of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery and especially the slave trade. The same conference settled the rules by which a power notified the others of a new occupation, and Italy duly notified the Berlin signatories of its Somali protectorates.

Three years later the campaign that would turn that clause into a programme was launched not by a government but by a cardinal. Charles Lavigerie, Archbishop of Algiers and Carthage, opened his anti-slavery crusade in 1888, preaching across Europe on the slave raids of the African interior; on 5 May of that year Leo XIII issued *In plurimis*, the first papal encyclical to condemn slavery as such, and in 1890 followed it with *Catholicae Ecclesiae*, on slavery in the missions, which established an obligatory annual collection for Africa. Out of Lavigerie's crusade came a set of new national bodies, and one of them was the Società Antischiavista d'Italia, founded in 1888 in Rome — a Catholic association devoted to ending the slave trade in Africa and, particularly, in the Italian colonies.

Notice what that did at home, because it is easy to walk past. The Italian state and the Roman Church were, on the question of Rome itself, irreconcilable. On the question of African slavery they were not merely reconcilable but allied, and the alliance ran through an organisation of Italian Catholics that supported Italian colonial expansion as a humanitarian undertaking. A government that could not get the Pope to acknowledge its capital could get Italian Catholics to bless its empire. Whatever else the anti-slavery cause was — and it was, in many of the men who preached it, entirely sincere — it was also the one currency in which the new Italian state and the authority that denied it could deal.

Abroad, the same coin bought admission. King Leopold, in agreement with London, convened a conference at Brussels in November 1889, and on 2 July 1890 the plenipotentiaries of seventeen states, Italy's among them, signed the General Act for the repression of the African slave trade. Its opening article does not read like a moral declaration. It reads like a specification:

> *Les Puissances déclarent que les moyens les plus efficaces pour combattre la traite à l'intérieur de l'Afrique sont les suivants: 1° Organisation progressive des services*

> *administratifs, judiciaires, religieux et militaires dans les territoires d'Afrique placés sous la souveraineté ou le protectorat des nations civilisées.*
>
> *The powers declare that the most effective means of counteracting the slave-trade in the interior of Africa are the following: 1. Progressive organization of the administrative, judicial, religious, and military services in the African territories placed under the sovereignty or protectorate of civilized nations.*

The article continues through fortified stations, roads and railways, steamers on the inland waters, telegraph lines, flying columns to keep the roads secure, and restrictions on the import of firearms. Colonial administration is not a means to some other end here; it is named, in the treaty's own voice, as the most effective means of ending the slave trade. Article II then sets out what the stations are to do besides intercepting slavers, and two of its provisions deserve to be read slowly. The first is that they are

> *de les initier aux travaux agricoles et aux arts professionnels, de façon à accroître leur bien-être, à les élever à la civilisation — to initiate them in agricultural labor and in the industrial arts so as to increase their welfare; to raise them to civilization.*

And the second is that they are

> *de prêter aide et protection aux entreprises du commerce, d'en surveiller la légalité en contrôlant notamment les contrats de service avec les indigènes et de préparer la fondation de centres de cultures permanents et d'établissements commerciaux — to give aid and protection to commercial enterprises; to watch over their legality by especially controlling contracts for service with natives, and to prepare the way for the foundation of permanent centres of cultivation and of commercial settlements.*

There it is, in the abolition treaty itself, thirty years before the first Italian banana left the Shebelle: the initiation of Africans into agricultural labour, the supervision of their contracts for service, and the preparation of permanent centres of cultivation, all of it entered on the page as anti-slavery machinery. Nobody smuggled that in. Seventeen states signed it, the humanitarian societies applauded it, and it meant what it said.

One further article has to be quoted, because it is the clause on which a colony will change hands fifteen years later. Article IV permits a signatory to delegate the whole business to a chartered company — and then closes the door it has just opened:

> *Les Puissances exerçant des pouvoirs souverains ou des protectorats en Afrique pourront toutefois déléguer à des compagnies munies de chartes, tout ou partie des engagements qu'elles assument en vertu de l'article III. Elles demeurent néanmoins directement responsables des engagements qu'elles contractent par le présent Acte général et en garantissent l'exécution.*

> *The States exercising sovereign powers or protectorates in Africa may in all cases delegate to companies provided with charters all or a portion of the engagements which they assume in virtue of Article III. They remain, nevertheless, directly responsible for the engagements which they contract by the present act, and guarantee the execution thereof.*

The act also built an apparatus to watch the watchers: an international bureau at Zanzibar, to which the signatories undertook to send their flag authorisations, crew lists, seizure reports and judgments, and a central office at Brussels through which the powers would periodically exchange the texts of their laws and their statistics on slaves intercepted and liberated. Italy was now on a register.

And within three years of signing, Italy did precisely what Article IV allowed. In 1892 the Sultan of Zanzibar granted a concession over the Benadir ports — Mogadishu, Merca, Brava, Warsheikh and Kismayo — against an annual payment reported at a hundred and sixty thousand rupees; from 1893 the ports were run by Filonardi's company, and from the end of the decade by the Società Anonima Commerciale Italiana del Benadir. The engagements Italy had contracted before seventeen states in Brussels were now in the hands of a trading firm, and Italy remained, by the treaty's own words, directly responsible for them and guarantor of their execution.

The distance to be measured

Set the three landscapes side by side and the shape of what follows stands up.

On the ground: a society whose faith had gone so deep that it cost nothing to hold and whose politics had never pooled into a seat a stranger could sit in, so that a conqueror would find nothing to capture and would have to buy, forge or beat his way to every hundred miles separately. Beside it, in the river valleys, real servitude embedded in a land regime that had kept it dispersed. Above both, a merchant sultanate whose slaving revenue was being shut down by the British navy and whose authority over the Somali

coast was a customs house and a fort. And across the sea, a poor and recent kingdom which had discovered that the price of being counted among the powers was payable in abolition, and had paid it — in a treaty which specified colonial administration as the remedy, the initiation of the African into agricultural labour as a benefit, permanent centres of cultivation as an objective, and the signatory's own guarantee as the security.

What that document licensed and what it obliged are the two halves of everything to come. The licence would eventually be spent: on stations, roads, a railway, a cotton experiment at Genale, a sugar and banana estate on the Shebelle, and on the labour that worked them, recruited by taxation, obligation and force from the very population whose liberation was the warrant. The obligation would be called in too, and sooner: when a parliamentary campaign in Rome established that the chartered company holding the Benadir had been complicit in the traffic it was there to suppress, the government that had guaranteed the execution of the Brussels engagements would have to take the colony back into its own hands to make its guarantee good.

Between those two facts runs a distance that is not the ordinary distance between a public word and a private one. The public word was true. Italy did suppress a slave trade on that coast, and men who had been slaves were freed, and the freeing was recorded and reported to a bureau. The public word was also the instrument by which a labour regime was built over the same people and the same fields within a generation, using clauses about contracts for service and centres of cultivation that had been written into the abolition treaty from the start. Setting the decree beside the plantation register, and letting the arithmetic between them stand without a verdict attached, is the work of everything that follows.

Reading the Somali and Italian landscapes against the pattern

Three returns, of which the first is a contribution, the second a correction the evidence forced, and the third a question this opening cannot yet answer.

The first is about audience. A colonial conqueror's legitimating account is usually cut for the people at home whose taxes and sons pay for the conquest, rather than for the conquered, whose belief his rifles have already made unnecessary. That holds here and is not in doubt. But it is not the first thing that happened. Before Italy had to persuade a single Italian of anything, it had to be admitted, and admission to the club of states

permitted to administer African territory ran through instruments its members had drafted and whose price they had set. Britain, having spent seventy years and a navy on the East African slave trade, had made abolition the coin; Italy, which needed recognition far more than Britain needed anything, paid in that coin because it was the only one the counter would take. Legitimacy is never minted but always borrowed from whatever the audience already honours — and here the borrowing has to be pushed one step earlier in the sequence than the ordinary colonial case requires, because the powers that ran those other cases were already inside.

Two consequences follow, and they are the reason it is worth setting down. The first is that the coin bought two audiences with one payment: a poor kingdom whose own Catholics had been forbidden by Rome to vote in its elections found, in African abolitionism, the single subject on which the Papacy would bless its expansion, so that the same claim which purchased standing abroad purchased at home a reconciliation the state's domestic politics could not deliver. The second, and sharper, is that a claim written into a treaty is not the same object as a claim preached from a platform. It has articles. It has a bureau at Zanzibar collecting the paperwork, and a central office at Brussels circulating the statistics. It has a clause permitting delegation to a chartered company and, in the same breath, refusing to let the delegation transfer the responsibility. A story cut for an audience can be adjusted when the audience changes; an engagement entered before seventeen signatories, with a compliance schedule and a guarantee, can be *breached* — and the party that breaches it is not the conquered but the conqueror or his agent. So a latecomer whose title rests on a written undertaking about his own conduct acquires a failure mode the ordinary colonial claim does not have, and the exposure is not to the conquered's disbelief but to the incumbents' inspection. Whether that inspection did anything, and to whom, is a question for later; that the machinery existed is established here.

The second return is a correction to the starting expectation, which had been that the Italians would find, in the Shebelle and Juba valleys, an existing slave-plantation economy — the residue of the Zanzibari trade — which they would denounce in their public words and reconstitute in their practice. The servitude is there and is not in dispute; the plantations are not. Clan elders' control over the allocation of land, and the practice of dispersing purchased captives into an internal exchange for cattle rather than concentrating them on estates, kept the coerced-labour holding from forming at all, and

foreign agriculturalists were kept out of the near hinterland. So what has to be tested through the extraction that follows is not reconstitution but construction: the coloniser did not rebuild a plantation order he had abolished; he built the one the prior order's own land rules had prevented, and abolishing that order's servitude was among the means by which the land was freed to be granted. That is a harder claim and a worse one, and it has to be earned against the record rather than assumed.

The third return is a question left open: what Italy came for cannot yet be read. In 1889 the Italian object appears to be neither the Somali producer nor Somali ground but the passage between them — ports, customs, a coaling position on the route to the Red Sea, and the standing that came from being seen to hold territory at all. A chartered company wants dividends and a firm wants a wharf; neither is the same want as a state that means to seat its own farmers on a river. That the object later changed is obvious from the fact that Italians eventually farmed the Shebelle; when it changed, and what changed it, is the first thing the floor of force has to establish, because almost everything else in the case is downstream of it.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The passages from the General Act of the Brussels Conference of 2 July 1890 — Article I on the means of combating the trade, Article II on the subsidiary duties of the stations, and Article IV on delegation to chartered companies and the signatories' continuing responsibility — are quoted in the French original with the contemporary official English translation as printed in the United States Statutes at Large, volume 27, where the Act appears with the President's proclamation of 2 April 1892; the list of signatory plenipotentiaries, including those of the King of Italy, is from the same text. Article 6 of the General Act of the Conference at Berlin of 26 February 1885 is quoted from the standard published English text. Both instruments are in the public domain. No Somali or Italian primary text is quoted verbatim in this opening; the Somali material is carried by inscription and by paraphrase, and the Italian instruments of 1889 and 1892 are described from secondary accounts pending verification against the treaty series, which the founding module will require.

Reported rather than quoted, and flagged as such. Ibn Battuta's account of Mogadishu in 1331 — the town's size, the sultan Abu Bakr ibn Shaykh 'Umar and his fluency in the local tongue and Arabic, the qadi's reception of the traveller, and the custom by which an

arriving merchant was claimed as a guest by a host who thereafter transacted on his behalf and without whom a sale was void — is given here in paraphrase and not in quotation, because the standard modern English translation is under copyright and the older public-domain versions have not been collated; the wording should be checked against a public-domain edition before any phrase is quoted. The annual payment of twelve hundred thalers to the Sultan of Hobyo, and the annual payment of a hundred and sixty thousand rupees under the Zanzibar concession of 1892, are reported from secondary and reference sources and have not been verified against the instruments; neither is load-bearing here. Italy's notification of its Somali protectorates to the Berlin signatories is likewise reported rather than documented.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the structure of Somali pastoral society — segmentary patrilineal descent, the diya-paying group constituted by explicit contract between lineages, and *xeer* as customary law administered by councils of elders without office — I. M. Lewis, *A Pastoral Democracy* (1961), and his earlier article on clanship and contract; and it should be said plainly that Lewis's clan paradigm is contested, notably by Lidwien Kapteijns and Catherine Besteman, who argue it flattens uterine and affinal ties, regional difference and the specific history of the south, so that the northern and central pastoral pattern is taken here from Lewis while the southern riverine material is taken from the critics. For the nineteenth-century economy of the south — the caravan circuits, the *abbaan* and his share, the clerical Reer Mumin lineage, the Ajuran collapse and the rise of the Geledi Gobroon at Afgooye, the Bardheere movement and its defeat in 1843, the Biimaal victories of 1848 and 1878, the client-cultivator arrangement founded on *sheegad*, the dispersal of purchased captives into internal exchange, the elders' control of land allocation and the exclusion of foreign agriculturalists, and the export figures for millet and sesame — Lee V. Cassanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*; E. A. Alpers on nineteenth-century Mogadishu; Catherine Besteman, *Unraveling Somalia*; Francesca Declich on the Gosha and on women and slavery in the Benadir; and Virginia Luling on the Geledi. For the Mogadishu inscriptions and their nisbas, the standard epigraphic literature as summarised in the recent survey work. For Zanzibar — Sa'id bin Sultan's removal to the island around 1840, cloves and slave labour, the Moresby, Hamerton and Frere treaties, and the reduction of the sultanate and the British protectorate of June 1890 — the standard accounts. For Lavigerie's crusade of 1888, the founding of the Società Antischiavista d'Italia in the same year, and its role in bringing the Italian state and the Catholic Church together on the colonial question, Lorenzo Ettorre

and Alessandro Di Meo on the Society, and Amalia Ribi Forclaz, *Humanitarian Imperialism*. Leo XIII's *In plurimis* of 5 May 1888 and *Catholicae Ecclesiae* of 20 November 1890 are named by title and date only and are not quoted here.

Contested figures, given as ranges. The number of Bantu-speaking captives sold from Zanzibar to the Somali coast across the nineteenth century is given as roughly twenty-five to fifty thousand, a range drawn from the reference literature and resting on estimates rather than counts; the annual figure of about six hundred for the 1840s, its rise in the 1860s and its collapse by the late 1880s, is Cassanelli's and Besteman's and is likewise an estimate. Mogadishu's population in the mid-century, put at about three thousand, is an external observer's figure. The grain and sesame export tonnages for the 1840s and for 1896 are as reported in the trade literature and are given to indicate order of magnitude. Italian illiteracy in the 1880s is deliberately not quantified here: the census series and the linguistic estimates are both disputed, and the point — that a large share of Italians could not read and that the share was far higher in the south — does not need a false precision. Italy's population of about thirty-one million and the life expectancy figures for 1888 and 1889 are from the standard demographic series. The dates of the Filonardi and Benadir company concessions are given loosely here (from 1893, and from the end of the 1890s to 1905) because the sources differ by a year on the second, and the founding module will fix them.

MODULE 1

NEITHER A CENT NOR A SOLDIER

The floor of force — how a kingdom that could not afford a war came to hold six hundred thousand square kilometres, in instalments, across thirty-eight years, and what each instalment actually cost.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

A conquest with no first day

Every other case in the series can name the day the floor went down. Algiers fell in three weeks in 1830; Hastings settled England in an afternoon; the Sokoto Caliphate ended at Burmi. The module that opens each study asks who held organised violence at the founding and by what act, and the discipline of the module is to read past the founding legend to the violence it covers. Applied here, that question returns an answer which is itself the finding, and which took some effort to accept: **there was no founding act.** Italy did not take Somalia. Italy acquired it in instalments over thirty-eight years, beginning in February 1889 with a salary paid to a sultan and ending in February 1927 with a naval blockade of the Horn, and in between it bought, leased, sub-let, abandoned, repurchased, and finally conquered a country it had claimed on paper for a generation before it could stand anywhere in the interior without an artillery escort.

This is not a colourful detail. It is the structure of the case, and it determines almost everything that follows. A floor laid in a single act is laid by a single party with a single set of wants. A floor laid in instalments is paid for by whoever happens to be standing in the position when the instalment falls due — and here that was, in sequence, a consul who was also a merchant, a Roman ministry that wanted a receipt it could show parliament, a Milanese textile trust that wanted cotton, a naval officer with a two-hour ultimatum, a major who thought every fire should be stamped out where it started, and finally a *quadrumvir* of the March on Rome who arrived believing the whole preceding thirty-four years had been a failure of nerve. Each of them wanted something different. Each of

them laid a different piece of the floor. And the country that emerged in 1927 was the shape of their disagreements as much as of anything Somali.

It is a general rule that the floor comes first and belief is laid over it afterwards to make it cheap. That sequence holds here. What this case adds is that the floor itself can be laid in a sequence, and that the sequence is not a delay in one conquest but the production of a different one.

What a poor state buys instead of a war

Begin with the arithmetic of 1889, because it is startling and because the men who made it were entirely open about what they were doing.

In February 1889 the Italian consul at Zanzibar, Vincenzo Filonardi, sailed to Hobyo and obtained from Sultan Yusuf Ali Kenadid a protection treaty whose operative sentence reads:

> *Noi abbiamo messo il nostro paese di Obbia e tutte le nostre possessioni, da El Marek a Ras Auad, sotto la protezione e governo di S. M. il magnanimo Re d'Italia, Umberto I: ciò noi facemmo per mezzo del nostro amico Filonardi, regio console d'Italia a Zanzibar.*

> *We have placed our country of Obbia and all our possessions, from El Marek to Ras Auad, under the protection and government of His Majesty the magnanimous King of Italy, Umberto I: this we did through our friend Filonardi, royal consul of Italy at Zanzibar.*

The consideration was set out in a separate undertaking of the same date, and it was a wage:

> *Noi [= Console Vincenzo Filonardi] promettiamo al Sultano Jusuf Ali Jusuf, Sultano d'Obbia, un'annualità di talleri mille duecento, come compenso del trattato oggi da esso stipulato e firmato a favore del regio Governo italiano.*

> *We [Consul Vincenzo Filonardi] promise to Sultan Yusuf Ali Yusuf, Sultan of Obbia, an annuity of twelve hundred thalers, as compensation for the treaty stipulated and signed by him today in favour of the royal Italian Government.*

Two months later, at Bandar Alula on the seventh of April, the same formula was applied to the Majeerteen — *da Ras Auad a Ras-el-Kyle*, from Ras Hafun down the Nugaal — for eighteen hundred thalers a year, with a supplementary six hundred paid to Hobyo so that neither sultan should feel underpriced. Total annual expenditure for the entire coast from Warsheikh to the British Somaliland frontier: three thousand six hundred Maria Theresa thalers.

It is worth pausing on how these agreements were reached, because the record contains a refusal. Boqor Osman Mahamuud did not want a protector. The commander of the Italian ship *Rapido* reported to the Minister of the Navy in March 1889 that the Sultan had told them he had never seen Italians or Italian ships before, that he would be glad of friendship, but that neither the flag nor the protectorate could be accepted, all his ancestors and he himself having always refused such proposals from other nations — and then the sentence that matters, which the commander reported in his own words rather than the Sultan's:

> *Aggiunse in seguito che il suo popolo era forte e che non aveva bisogno di aiuti perché nel caso che fosse attaccato alle coste si ritirerebbe nell'interno.*

> *He added then that his people were strong and that he had no need of assistance because in the event of being attacked on the coasts he would withdraw into the interior.*

That is a correct military assessment, offered in 1889 and vindicated in 1925, when his son did exactly that. It is also the first sighting of the variable that will govern the whole cost column: on this ground, exit was cheap and everybody knew it. The Sultan signed six weeks later anyway, for reasons the Landscape set out — the flag was a weapon in his quarrel with his cousin and with Zanzibar, and he took it as a man takes an ally, not as a man takes a master.

Now the public words. On the sixteenth of March 1889, answering a question in the Chamber of Deputies, Crispi explained the Hobyo protectorate. The parliamentary record summarises rather than transcribes him, and the summary is in the third person, so what follows is the Chamber's account of his answer and not his exact sentence — but the phrase is the one that matters and the record is emphatic about it. Of the various parts of the world, he observed, only some regions of Africa remained unoccupied; Italy had

nowhere impressed the sign of its empire; in Africa too it was necessary to move quickly, lest others get there first.

> *Quindi non si aveva avuta alcuna esitazione ad accettare il protettorato d'Obbia che non costava né un centesimo, né un soldato.*

> *There had therefore been no hesitation in accepting the protectorate of Obbia, which cost neither a cent nor a soldier.*

And he went on to say what the government intended: to start Italian commercial companies in the places conceded, and to hope for one of those conventions the English and the Germans had managed, which would put Italy in the position of not having to send its soldiers down there.

Hold that sentence beside the arithmetic and the whole design is visible. Italy in 1889 had a treasury wrecked by a tariff war with France, a building collapse in Rome, and a haemorrhage of emigrants; it had, in Mancini's own earlier justification of the Massawa expedition, an army which had for long years borne badly its complete inaction, *nella ingrata pigrizia della caserma*, in the ungrateful idleness of the barracks. What it could pay for was signatures. So it bought signatures, notified them to the Berlin powers under Article 34, and entered on the map of Africa a stretch of coast a thousand miles long that no Italian could have walked ten miles inland from and returned.

The revealed-preference test asks what an apex pays for when it need not. Here the test runs in reverse and yields something the collection has not previously had to name. Italy paid a salary to two sovereigns it had no capacity to coerce — not because legitimacy was needed for a floor it already held, but *because there was no floor*, and the salary was standing in for one. That is not co-optation in the ordinary sense, which presupposes a conqueror with force to spare who chooses to buy rather than break. It is the poor man's substitute for the founding act itself, and it purchases something quite specific: not obedience, and not revenue, but **a document admissible in Europe.**

Leasing a sovereignty that did not exist

The second instalment shows the same technique applied to ground where the seller's title was already known — by the buyer, in writing, from a document the buyer's own allies had signed — to be worth nothing.

In June 1886 the delegates of France, Germany and Great Britain met at Zanzibar and set down, by joint declaration, what the sovereign rights of the Sultan actually amounted to. Article 8 disposed of the Somali coast in a single line:

> *Kismayu, Brava, Merka et Magadisho: le territoire relevant du Sultan n'excède pas celui même circonscrit par les murs de ces villes.*

> *Kismayo, Brava, Merca and Mogadishu: the territory pertaining to the Sultan does not exceed that circumscribed by the walls of these towns.*

Four towns, and nothing beyond the wall. The German-British exchange of notes later that year generously extended this to radii of ten sea miles for three ports and five for Warsheikh, which was an improvement on paper and made no difference on the ground, since the ground belonged to the clans and everyone concerned knew it.

On the twelfth of August 1892 Italy leased that. The concession was signed on the Sultan's behalf by Gerald Portal, the British agent and consul-general — Zanzibar having accepted a British protectorate in June 1890 — and its first article transfers, with a precision that repays slow reading:

> *The Government of His Highness the Sultan of Zanzibar makes over to the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy all the powers which they possess over the town and ports of the Benadir Coast, namely, Brawa, Merka, Magadisho, each with a radius landwards of 10 sea miles, and Warsheikh, with a radius landwards of 5 sea miles, and the islands in their vicinity, to be administered politically and judicially in the name of the Government of His Highness the Sultan of Zanzibar and under his flag.*

All the powers which they possess. The instrument is not lying. It conveys exactly what was there, and what was there had been measured six years earlier and found to stop at the wall. For this Italy undertook to pay forty thousand rupees on taking possession and forty thousand at the end of each quarter — a hundred and sixty thousand rupees a year, some two hundred and sixty-eight thousand lire, reduced to a hundred and twenty thousand rupees by a further protocol in September 1896 — for a term of twenty-five years, renewable for twenty-five more by simple declaration. Italy also acquired, in Article II, the right to levy any taxes, tributes, dues, tolls and duties it considered necessary to meet the expenses of the local government, the maintenance of public forces, the administration of

justice, and the construction of roads and harbours; and the right to appoint the governors, all the judicial officers, and the officials of all ranks.

So: the right to tax a population it did not govern, in order to pay for forces it did not have, in a territory whose seller's title stopped at four town walls, administered under another sovereign's flag, at a rent of a quarter of a million lire a year. And then Italy sub-let it. On the sixteenth of July 1893 the administration of the Benadir passed to the *Compagnia italiana per la Somalia V. Filonardi & C.*, on a three-year term with a fifty-thousand-rupee penalty for abandonment — doubled if the abandonment came in the event of war — and on the twenty-first of September various *wali* and clan shaykhs were summoned to Zanzibar for a ceremony investing Filonardi with rule over ports his company would garrison with, as an earlier Italian note for the neighbouring station of Itala specified in full, one *aghida*, one sergeant, two corporals, one accountant, sixty-three armed men, one pilot and six sailors.

Sixty-three armed men. That is the founding floor of Italian Somalia, and it is worth writing the number down before any of the later ones, because the pattern's instruction is to name the actual armed force — composition, size, command, pay — rather than accept the map's colour as evidence of control.

The contribution this instalment makes to the framework is, I think, the sharpest thing in the module, and it wants stating plainly. **A conqueror who purchases title from a nominal incumbent has not laid a floor; he has acquired a receipt — and because the receipt generates paper and the unheld ground does not, the metropole's picture of its own conquest is formed by the instrument rather than by the country.** This is not deception. Nobody hid the 1886 declaration; it was published, and the Italian ministry had a copy. It is that a lease, a rent, a quarterly payment and an investiture ceremony all produce documents, and a hundred miles of thorn scrub in which no Italian has ever set foot produces none. The seam the brief predicted — split in two by distance, with the metropole holding one end — opens here, at the founding, before any policy has been made about anything, purely as an artefact of what leaves a record.

What the floor could actually do: a ship, a landing party, and the greatest possible number of projectiles

The record of the 1890s answers the question of what force Italy could bring to bear, and the answer is: naval gunfire against a shoreline, and nothing else.

In April 1890 a party from the ship *Volta* landed near Warsheikh to open talks with the local chiefs and was attacked; Commander Carlo Zavagli and the ship's engineer Stefano Bertorello were killed. The commander of the *Volta*, Amari, reported to the Minister of the Navy what he had concluded and what he had therefore done. The aggression had been committed against unarmed persons who came amicably on behalf of a friendly nation to offer gifts; it was unjustifiable; it could only be attributed to rebellion against the Sultan of Zanzibar and to a spirit of wicked brutality, in order to assert their independence. To safeguard the honour of the offended Italian flag, to assert the power of the nation, and to punish the killing, he judged it necessary to act energetically and at once, as a warning — because if he did nothing, not only the natives of Warsheikh but those of the whole coast, when they heard of it, would hold the power of the Italian nation in only relative consideration.

> *Per queste considerazioni, decisi avvicinarmi alla città e villaggio e lanciare sovra essi il maggior numero possibile di proietti.*

> *For these considerations, I decided to approach the town and village and to hurl upon them the greatest possible number of projectiles.*

Fifty-six shells, by his account. In May, answering the Chamber, Crispi gave the number as sixty, added that the village had been burnt, said the inhabitants had been punished quite enough, and attributed the whole affair to the dead officer's imprudence in going ashore without due precaution. The two figures cannot both be right and nothing turns on which is; what the discrepancy shows is that four weeks and four thousand miles had already introduced drift between the report from the ship and the statement in the Chamber, in the same direction, on the same afternoon, without anyone intending it.

This is the pattern for fifteen years. In October 1893 a lieutenant, Maurizio Talmone, was assassinated at Merca. In December 1903 Lieutenant Grabau took the *Galileo* to the village of Durbo in the Majeerteen and invited the local chief to raise the Italian flag; the chief asked for a written order from his own Sultan; Grabau gave him two hours, then

opened fire, and while standing on deck directing the bombardment was shot dead from the shore. The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs reported this to the Chamber on the eighth of December in a formulation worth keeping:

> *il tenente Grabau volendo sbarcare a Durbo, giunto in faccia al villaggio aveva invitato il capo ad issare la bandiera italiana, com'era suo dovere.*
>
> *Lieutenant Grabau, wishing to land at Durbo, having arrived opposite the village, had invited the chief to hoist the Italian flag, as was his duty.*

Com'era suo dovere — as was his duty. Fourteen years after a treaty the chief was not party to, in a sultanate whose ruler had told the Italians to their faces that his people needed no help, a man who asked to see the order in writing is described in the Italian parliament as having failed in a duty. The fiction has by now become furniture; nobody in the room notices it going past.

Adwa: the founding written on another frontier

Then, on the first of March 1896, an event a thousand miles away decided the next decade of the Somali floor.

Adwa was not a Somali battle. It was fought in Tigray, against Menelik, over the second text of the Wuchale treaty, and it destroyed an Italian army. Its effect on the Benadir was immediate and total: there would be no money, no troops and no political appetite for anything on the Indian Ocean coast for years. The Filonardi concession was not renewed; the company failed; the state took the ports back reluctantly in 1896 and passed them on again at the end of the decade to a new trust, the *Società anonima commerciale italiana del Benadir*, whose shareholders were Lombard textile magnates — Sanseverino, Mylius, Carminati, Benigno Crespi — with a capital of one million lire in four thousand shares of two hundred and fifty each, a fifty-year term, and the entirely rational object of growing their own raw cotton on ground flying an Italian flag rather than paying to import it.

Nine months after Adwa came the second blow. On the twenty-fifth of November 1896 Antonio Cecchi — consul, explorer, the man who had first proposed the whole Somali design to Mancini in 1885, and by then the effective head of the Italian establishment in the south — camped at Lafoole, some twelve miles inland on the road to Afgooye, with a caravan of about seventy askari, two naval commanders and fourteen other Italians drawn

mostly from the crews of two ships. The camp was attacked that night; the column was attacked again as it moved off in the early morning; by half past eight Cecchi and the great majority of the Italians were dead, along with much of the escort. The attackers were Wacdaan and Biimaal. Along the Benadir the year is remembered as *Axad Shiiki*, the Sunday year of Cecchi.

The Italian answer was Captain Giorgio Sorrentino's punitive expedition of February to April 1897: a landing under naval gunfire, a fort built on the site and named after the dead consul, four seventy-five-millimetre guns, a hundred and fifty Eritrean askari landed in April as reinforcement, and the systematic burning of the villages held responsible. Robert Hess's judgement on the expedition — that whatever impression it made was not a lasting one — is the standard one, and the evidence is that the Italians then withdrew to the coast and stayed there.

The floor of force is ordinarily read as a contest between a conqueror and what he finds. This case inserts a third input and shows it dominating both. **The chronology of a colonial floor is frequently set not by the resistance it meets but by the metropole's fortunes on a different frontier.** Nothing the Somalis did in 1896 accounts for the shape of the next nine years; what accounts for it is a defeat in Ethiopia, and the specific institutional consequence was that a country was handed to a cotton trust because the state that had claimed it could no longer face the expense of holding it. The men who then governed the Benadir wanted dividends, and the floor they built was the floor a firm builds: enough armed men to protect a station, and no more.

The scandal, the state, and the war that abolition started

The third instalment is where the sequence turns, and it is the one on which the whole abolition argument rests.

Through 1903 the Benadir Company came apart in public. The explorer Luigi Robecchi Bricchetti, commissioned by the Italian Anti-Slavery Society, published his letters from the coast; a naval investigation reported that slaves were still entering the Benadir ports and being bought and sold under the eyes of Italian authorities and on the registers of the Mogadishu *qadis*; the quarrels between the Company's officials and the military became a press campaign and then a parliamentary debate; and a commission of inquiry which the Company itself had set up to disprove the charges — Chiesi and Travelli — instead

documented them. The Giolitti–Tittoni government denounced the 1898 convention. On the thirteenth of January 1905 Italy purchased the Benadir outright, paying a hundred and forty-four thousand pounds sterling to the Sultan of Zanzibar; on the fourteenth of February the Company was dissolved; on the sixteenth of March the consul Luigi Mercatelli took over the government of a possession the chronologies of the day put at some six hundred thousand square kilometres and half a million people.

That is the moment Italy became, for the first time, the direct sovereign of southern Somalia — sixteen years after the first treaty, thirteen after the first lease, and because of a scandal about slavery rather than because of anything it had won.

And here the arithmetic turns over, in a way that has to be kept in view all the way to the extraction that funds the plantations. The first act of Captain Alessandro Sapelli, brought in from the army to govern after the Company's fall, was a decree prohibiting the slave trade in the territories under Italian jurisdiction. The response was war. The Biimaal of the lower Shebelle — for whom the traffic and the servile cultivation it supplied were not incidental but structural — besieged Merca from April 1904 to January 1905, and the siege was broken only by sea; the Italian resident Giacomo Trevis was assassinated; a coalition of Biimaal, Wacdaan, Hintire and elements of the Geledi formed under the Sufi teachers Sheekh Abdi Abikar Gaafle and Ma'allin Mursal Abdi Yusuf, and fought for four more years. The dead of the Merca siege, put in the reference literature at something like twelve hundred and attributed to starvation and scurvy rather than to fighting, are the first mass casualties of the Italian floor and they were produced by a blockade, not a battle.

The information-asymmetry seam here is not between a public word and a private one. It is between two true statements. Italy did suppress a slave trade on that coast, and the suppression was the reason the state took the colony. Italy also fought a four-year war against the people whose economy the suppression broke, and the arithmetic between the humanitarian warrant and the burnt villages is the arithmetic to be laid out. Neither half cancels the other; what matters is only that the two happened in that order, for that reason.

1908: the actual conquest of the lower Shebelle

The interior was taken in a single season, and the record of it is unusually complete.

The armed force had grown slowly. The Company had raised a *Corpo delle guardie del Benadir* of six native companies in December 1903; on the state's takeover the twelve companies then existing were regrouped into three infantry companies of four hundred and forty-six natives and five Italian officers each, plus a gunner company of ninety natives and one Italian officer; a governor's decree of June 1907 reorganised them into six companies. In April 1908, with the occupation of the Shebelle and the final subjection of the Biimaal in view, the force was to be raised to three thousand five hundred men by the addition of some fifteen Italian officers and a thousand askari. On the fifth of April 1908 the Italian parliament passed the law uniting the southern possessions into a single entity, *Somalia Italiana*, and the troops took their final name, *Regio corpo truppe coloniali della Somalia italiana*.

Note the ratio, because it is the same ratio Eritrea returned and it is the load-bearing fact about every colonial floor in this corpus: four hundred and forty-six Africans to five Italians in a company. Note also who the Africans were. The new commander, Major Antonino Di Giorgio — a veteran of Adwa, where he had led seven charges with a drawn sabre — was given funds at Mogadishu to recruit six hundred more askari, and recruited them chiefly in the Arabian peninsula, on the stated ground, reported by officers engaged against the rebels, that they guaranteed greater discipline and fidelity than Africans. His striking force in August 1908 was eleven hundred men with nine hundred and fifty rifles, four mountain guns and a small camel train: four Eritrean companies and two Somali-Arab.

So the floor of Italian Somalia, at the moment it was actually laid, consisted of Eritreans and Arabians, officered by Italians, fighting Somalis. Eritrea's study found that the colony's true export was its men. This is the receiving end: the men one Horn colony grew were spent taking the next Horn colony over, and the conqueror preferred them to local recruits precisely because they were strangers.

On the twenty-ninth of August the column marched from Berire towards Mererè, the Intera centre north of Danane. Attacked in open ground, Di Giorgio formed square — infantry on the faces, guns and the caravan in the centre — and moved the guns to the flanks to fire canister as the Somalis, who were armed largely with bows, lances and poisoned arrows, tried to close for hand-to-hand fighting. The guns then shelled the village and ended resistance in minutes. The enemy dead were put at about a hundred; two askari were wounded, one by an arrow whose poison the column's medical officer

treated with strychnine. The village was fired, burned poorly, and was burnt again properly the following day after its inhabitants had been evacuated. Afgooye was occupied on the second of September after ten hours' march in the rain.

Two accounts of this were published in Italy within the fortnight. The *Corriere della Sera* of the tenth of September carried Giuliano Bonacci's report from the column, which concluded that

> *incendiare il villaggio è stata una dolorosa necessità politica*
>
> *burning the village was a painful political necessity*

and justified it on the grounds that the Hintera were believed not to have been strangers to the massacre at Lafoole, and that Mererè had been the centre of infection and the hearth of opposition to the Italian government. The Agenzia Stefani communiqué covering the same operations reported the reconnaissance towards Afgooye, the enemy repulsed with heavy losses, two askari rather seriously wounded and a lieutenant slightly, the definitive occupation of Afgooye on the second of September after ten hours of march made painful by rain, the excellent state and health of the troops, and then:

> *L'accoglienza della popolazione fu festosa e cordiale; fu innalzata la bandiera italiana fra le salve dell'artiglieria e le "fantasie" degli indigeni.*
>
> *The reception by the population was festive and cordial; the Italian flag was raised amid salvoes of artillery and the "fantasias" of the natives.*

Set the two beside each other and leave the sum. Both are true. The reception at Afgooye does appear to have been cordial — the village chiefs came out, the Sultan of Ghelebi paid a call with a large armed following, the courtesy was returned — and it was cordial two days after the column had burnt Mererè and would have been perfectly legible to everyone present as the cordiality of people who had seen what happened to villages that were not. The communiqué omits nothing that is false. It simply reports the artillery as ceremonial.

What followed is also worth recording, because it shows the metropole's constraint working exactly as the general pattern predicts and changing nothing. The governor, Tommaso Carletti, who believed expansion should proceed by degrees and by dialogue with the Somali chiefs, judged that Di Giorgio had used an iron fist, forbade him to continue the campaign, and refused him the annexation of the Shebelle basin. The

socialist and radical press compared the operation to the Belgian mercenaries in Leopold's Congo. Di Giorgio asked to be recalled and was. And the ground he had taken stayed taken. A metropolitan conscience constrained the language, the career and the pace; it did not return a village.

The long middle, and the man who thought it had all been a failure of nerve

Between 1908 and 1923 Italy held what it had taken and very little more: the coastal towns, the lower Shebelle, a line of posts, a frontier with Ethiopia fixed approximately by a treaty of 1908 because the country was too vast to survey. Northwards the great Dervish war of Mohammed Abdullah Hassan ran until 1920 and was overwhelmingly a British affair; the Italian involvement was episodic and should not be annexed to this story. The two northern sultanates continued to exist as sultanates. A treaty concluded with Hobyo as late as November 1918 was described by a later Italian official, with evident distaste, as made on a basis of perfect equality, and as providing that where armed men crossed the boundary the local authority should seize their weapons and return them to whichever authority the men belonged to — so that an Italian officer taking a walk in the *protected* territory might find himself disarmed by the Sultan's askari.

Then, on the eighth of December 1923, Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon landed at Mogadishu.

He was a *quadrumvir* of the March on Rome, sent to a colony partly to get him out of Rome, and he regarded the arrangement he found as an absurdity: a colony whose northern third was held by treaty with sovereigns who kept their own armed men. His legal position, which he took from the more accommodating European international lawyers of the day, was that a colonial protectorate was a different species from a protectorate under international law — the latter applying to Liechtenstein, the former to treaties with African sovereigns — and that such agreements were therefore instruments for acquiring title rather than engagements entered in good faith. On the tenth of July 1925 a decree-law authorised, in a phrase that did the work, a reorganisation of the *Italian possessions* in northern Somalia in order better to guarantee order and security and to exercise the authority of the State more effectively. Calling the sultanates possessions settled the question that the campaign then executed.

He had also built the instrument. He reorganised the colonial corps, created a *Corpo Zaptié* of Somali and Eritrean gendarmerie under Carabinieri command, and in 1924 founded the *dubats* — irregular Somali levies, the name meaning white turban — under Major Camillo Bechis. The floor that would break the sultanates was, again, overwhelmingly African: Somali irregulars, Somali and Eritrean gendarmerie, Eritrean battalions shipped across, Italian officers, and the guns of the Regia Marina.

Operations opened on the first of October 1925 with a landing at Alula. Hobyo went in days: the Sultan's troops disarmed, Ali Yusuf and his family arrested and taken to Mogadishu, resistance regathering afterwards at Galkayo and El Buur under Omar Samantar and others, taking an Italian fort at El Buur and defeating a punitive column before the leaders crossed into Ethiopia. In the Majeerteen it took two years. On the fourteenth of October the commissioner at Alula demanded total disarmament of Boqor Osman Mahamuud at Bargal; the arms went inland instead. De Vecchi embarked on the *Campania* on the twentieth to direct operations in person. At Bender Bela on the twenty-eighth of October the Italians were beaten; they retook the village on the sixth of November and destroyed it. Bargal was bombarded for something like twenty-two consecutive hours. Warships were stationed around the Horn to blockade the coast. Lieutenant-Colonel Splendorelli was ambushed and killed at El Bot on the thirtieth of November. Boqor Osman and his son Hersi Boqor withdrew into the interior — as the father had told the Italians in 1889 that he would — and the Sultan surrendered only towards the end of 1927, his son continuing from Ethiopia for years afterwards. The last submission is dated to February 1927.

Italian accounts of the campaign give the disarmament yield as sixteen thousand five hundred firearms and the whole cost as five hundred and fifty Italian and one thousand two hundred and thirty-six Somali dead. Both figures should be handled with tongs. The first is a count of a physical thing and is probably the most reliable number here. The second and third are the conqueror's own, the "Italian" dead were overwhelmingly Somali and Eritrean askari in Italian service, and a total of twelve hundred Somali dead for two years of naval bombardment, blockade and village destruction across the Majeerteen is a floor rather than an estimate. The grim accounting will have to do better, and may not be able to.

What is certain is the date. On the ground the Italians had claimed since April 1889, the last of it came under Italian control in February 1927 — thirty-eight years, one month, and three governments later.

Reading the Somali floor against the pattern

Three returns: one confirmation stated as a confirmation, one contribution, and one correction to the expectation carried in.

The confirmation: the floor was African, and here it was imported. Eritrea's study found that where a conqueror can afford neither to install his belief nor to garrison the ground himself, co-optation becomes the floor — an order held by an army recruited nine-tenths from the conquered. Somalia confirms it without qualification, at every stage: sixty-three armed men under an *aghida* in 1892; companies of four hundred and forty-six Africans under five Italians in 1905; four Eritrean companies and two Somali-Arab in the column that took the Shebelle in 1908; dubats, zaptié and Eritrean battalions in the campaign of 1925. But it adds a sharpening the Eritrean case could not supply, because Eritrea was the source rather than the destination. **Where the local population is judged unreliable, the co-opted floor is not recruited locally but imported — and it is imported from the conqueror's other colonies.** Di Giorgio recruited six hundred askari in Arabia on the explicit ground that they were more disciplined and faithful than Africans; the Eritrean battalions were shipped across the Horn; the Somali floor was manned by strangers. This closes the loop back to Eritrea's extraction finding with a mechanism rather than an analogy: the men one colony grew were spent taking the next, and the reason was not logistics but the conqueror's judgement that a floor should not be made of the people it stands on.

The contribution: the receipt is not the floor, and the metropole reads the receipt. This wants stating as generally as the evidence will bear. A conqueror who lacks the force for a founding act does not necessarily wait. He can buy a title from a nominal incumbent — a suzerain whose own claim has already been measured and found to stop at a town wall — and he can lease, sub-let, garrison and tax on the strength of it. What he acquires by doing so is not control of the ground but **an instrument that behaves, in the metropole's records, exactly as control would.** The lease generates a rent, a quarterly payment, an investiture ceremony, a governor, a law approving the convention, a line in the budget and a colour on the map. The unheld interior generates nothing at all, because

there is nobody there to file. So the asymmetry that the series usually finds being *produced* — by censorship, by distance, by a governor's discretion over what goes in the despatch — is here present at the founding as a pure artefact of documentation, before anyone has decided to conceal anything. Crispi's *né un centesimo, né un soldato* was an exactly accurate description of the treaty and a wholly false description of the country, and the two never had to be reconciled because only one of them was written down. **Where a floor is acquired by instrument rather than by act, expect the metropole's picture of the conquest to be formed by the instrument, and expect the correction to arrive only when somebody is killed** — which is why the Italian parliament's Somali business for fifteen years consists almost entirely of ministers explaining dead lieutenants.

Two consequences follow. The first is that a floor assembled in instalments is assembled by whoever holds the position when each instalment falls due, so the founding fork — what a chartered company wants against what a state wants against what a Fascist state wants — runs three times on one ground with the terrain and the population held constant, which is a rare experimental condition and the settlement can exploit it. The second is that the third input this case forced into view, the metropole's fortunes on another frontier, is not peculiar to Italy: **Adwa did more to determine the shape of the Somali floor than any Somali action did**, and any reading of a colonial founding as a two-party contest will keep missing the party that was not present.

The correction: the "two foundings" frame was too tidy. The seed proposed a double founding — liberal company, then Fascist state — and it is a real structure, but the evidence does not support two. There are at least four distinct floor-laying acts, by four different kinds of party, with two long intervals of nothing: the purchased protectorates of 1889, the leased and sub-let ports of 1892–1905, the state's conquest of the lower Shebelle in 1908 after a scandal about slavery had made the state the sovereign, and the Fascist reduction of the sultanates in 1925–27. De Vecchi's campaign is not a second founding on virgin ground; it is the completion of a floor three previous parties had each declined to finish because none of them could afford to. What makes it look like a founding is that he was the first Italian with both the will and the instrument, and that he said so loudly. The general account should hold "founded twice" as one pattern among several and add the one this case actually shows: **the floor laid in instalments, where the number of instalments is set by the conqueror's capacity and the identity of each payer by whoever was in the chair.**

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The Hobyo protection treaty of 8 February 1889 and its accompanying undertaking of an annuity of 1,200 thalers; the Majeerteen protection treaty concluded at Bandar Alula on 7 April 1889; Article 8 of the joint declaration of France, Germany and Great Britain signed at Zanzibar on 9 June 1886; Articles I, II and VIII of the concession of 12 August 1892 between Zanzibar and Italy, quoted from the English text, the concession having been drawn in Arabic, English and French with the French or English alone decisive; the note of the Foreign Minister Brin of 4 July 1892 specifying the garrison to be maintained at Itala; Amari's report to the Minister of the Navy on the bombardment of Warsheikh; the parliamentary record's account of Crispi's answers of 16 March 1889 and 13 May 1890 and of Under-Secretary Fusinato's statement of 8 December 1903; Mancini's speech of 6 May 1885 on the idleness of the barracks; and the reported words of Boqor Osman Mahamuud in the letter of 26 March 1889 from Amoretti, commander of the *Rapido*, to the Minister of the Navy — all are quoted in the original Italian or French as reproduced, with archival citations, in Tullio Scovazzi's chapter on the origins of Italian colonisation in Somalia in *Political and legal aspects of Italian colonialism in Somalia* (2020), an open-access volume. The underlying documents are printed in the Italian Foreign Ministry's *Trattati, convenzioni, accordi, protocolli ed altri documenti relativi all'Africa* (1906), in the *L'Italia in Africa* documentary series, and in *L'Africa italiana al Parlamento nazionale 1882–1905* (1907), and are in the public domain; the the translations are from the originals. Two cautions belong on the face of the page. First, Crispi's *né un centesimo, né un soldato* and Fusinato's *com'era suo dovere* come from a parliamentary record that summarises in the third person rather than transcribing, so they are the Chamber's account of what was said and not certainly the speakers' syllables; the phrases are nonetheless quoted as the record gives them. Second, the account of the Warsheikh affair gives the attack as 24 April 1890 and Amari's report on it as 20 April 1890, which cannot both be correct; the discrepancy is in the source and has not been resolved here, so the month is given and the day is not.

The Agenzia Stefani communiqué on the Afgooye operation and Giuliano Bonacci's despatch in the *Corriere della Sera* of 10 September 1908 are quoted as they are reproduced in a modern account of the Di Giorgio campaign; the originals have not been read directly and the wording is given as that account gives it. Both are period newspaper and press-agency material and out of copyright.

Reported rather than quoted. The text of the decree-law of 10 July 1925, no. 1551, is given here only in the English rendering used by Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf in his foreword to the same volume, describing an authorised reorganisation of the "Italian possessions" in northern Somalia to guarantee order and security and exercise the authority of the State more effectively. The Italian original has not been consulted and no phrase of it is quoted; since the word *possessions* is load-bearing for the argument made here, the original should be checked before it is relied on further. Renzo Meregazzi's remarks on the 1918 Hobyo treaty and on the disarming of Italian officers by the Sultan's askari are likewise reported through Yusuf's foreword. Sapelli's decree prohibiting the slave trade is described from secondary accounts and its text has not been seen; the robe will require it.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. Robert L. Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia* (1966), remains the standard English narrative and the source, directly or at one remove, of most of the campaign detail here, including the composition of Cecchi's caravan at Lafoole and the judgement that the punitive expedition of 1897 made no lasting impression. Angelo Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, is the indispensable Italian account and is a committed anti-colonial history; where his judgements are used they are marked as his. Marco Guadagni's work on the colonial origins of the public domain in southern Somalia supplied the dating of the Filonardi administration. Lee V. Cassanelli on the Benadir and Somali social history, and the specialist literature on the Biimaal resistance, underlie the account of the Merca siege and the Banadir coalition. The narrative of the 1908 column, the founding of the dubats, and the sequence of the 1925–27 campaign has been assembled in part from Italian enthusiast and colonial-commemorative websites which reproduce documents and photographs of real value inside a frankly apologetic frame; the concrete details taken from them — force compositions, dates, the *Corriere* and Stefani texts — have been used and their framing has not.

Contested figures, given as ranges or flagged. The dead of the Merca siege of 1904–05, usually given as about twelve hundred and attributed to starvation and scurvy rather than combat, is an estimate in the reference literature and rests on no count. The Italian dead of Lafoole are given as fourteen Italians besides Cecchi in the standard account, with the losses among the roughly seventy askari not separately recorded; Somali accounts give higher Italian totals including the escort, and the two are not necessarily inconsistent. The casualty figures for the campaign of the sultanates — 550 Italian and 1,236 Somali dead,

with 16,500 firearms recovered — are Italian colonial figures reproduced on commemorative sites; the arms count is probably sound, the Somali figure should be read as a minimum, and the "Italian" dead were overwhelmingly African askari in Italian service. Sources differ on whether Giacomo Trevis was killed in 1897 or 1904; the weight of the literature is on 1904 and that is what is used here, but nothing in the argument turns on it. Contemporary Italian chronologies give the possession Mercatelli took over in 1905 as about 600,000 square kilometres and half a million people; both are administrative estimates of a country nobody had surveyed or counted, and the population figure in particular should be treated as a guess. Figures for the Italian civilian population of the colony vary wildly between sources and across dates — one Italian account gives about 1,700 at the end of the De Vecchi period — and are not relied on here; the settlement will have to fix them.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

MODULE 2

NO ASCERTAINED OWNER

The settlement — how a trading company with sixty-three armed men wrote itself the ownership of a country in one sentence, what it actually wanted (which was not land), and how the state that inherited the sentence spent thirty years discovering what it was for.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The sentence

On the fourteenth of March 1895, at the small coastal station of Itala north of Warsheikh, the *Compagnia italiana per la Somalia V. Filonardi & C.* — a private firm with a three-year lease, a subsidy, and a garrison the size of a village school — promulgated a provisional regulation for the government and administration of the territory under Italian protection between the mouth of the Juba and the district of Itala. Its first article, under the heading *Terre demaniali*, reads in full:

> *Tutte le terre incolte che non abbiano un proprietario accertato appartengono al R. Governo Italiano.*

> *All uncultivated lands which do not have an ascertained owner belong to the Royal Italian Government.*

Twenty-four words. It is the whole settlement of Italian Somalia, and everything that follows is either the machinery that made it true or the uses to which it was eventually put.

Three things about that sentence want establishing before anything else. The first is that it was written by a company, not a state: the party promulgating it held the Benadir under sub-lease from a government which held it under lease from the Sultan of Zanzibar, whose own title the powers had measured in 1886 and found to stop at four town walls. The second is that the state wrote it anyway — the regulation carries a note recording that it had been approved in advance by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, by despatch of the twenty-fourth of October 1893, some seventeen months before the company put its name

to it. The third, and the one that governs much of what follows, is that **nobody involved wanted the land.** The Filonardi Company wanted customs receipts. The Benadir Company that succeeded it wanted cotton delivered to Lombard mills. Neither had a settler, a plough, or a plan for a farm. They wrote themselves the freehold of southern Somalia because it was one clause long, cost nothing, and might one day be useful.

Twenty-five years later it was useful.

What the instrument found

The prior form was established in the opening landscape, and it needs only restating in the terms the settlement requires.

Land in the riverine south was not a thing. It was an allocation, made by the elders of the clan that held the stretch of valley, to the clansmen of that clan, defensible against outsiders precisely because the allocation was an expression of membership rather than a transferable object. Beneath and beside the clansmen worked dependants whose position derived from *sheegad*, the older pastoral custom by which a weaker group grazed on a stronger group's ground as its clients, and, from the nineteenth century, an unfree population — captives of clan and frontier warfare, and a smaller stream of Bantu-speaking people brought up the coast from Zanzibar — who cultivated grain and sesame that reached Hadramawt and Oman in quantity. There was no register. There were no deeds. There was a qadi's court in each coastal town keeping records of transactions in urban property and in persons, and in the interior there was nothing written at all, because there was nothing that needed writing: everyone concerned knew whose ground it was, and the knowing was the title.

Set the 1895 sentence against that and the mechanism is visible without any need to impute bad faith to the man who drafted it. *Uncultivated* disposes of the pastoral three-quarters of the country at a stroke, since grazing land is by definition uncultivated and the pattern's Lockean warrant — improvement confers title, so the unimproved is unowned — was the common sense of every European chancery in 1895. And *an ascertained owner* disposes of most of the rest, because ascertainment is a documentary operation and this was a country without documents. The clause does not say the Somalis do not own their land. It says that where ownership cannot be *ascertained*, the land is the Royal Italian

Government's — which, in a country with no register, is a description of nearly everything, arrived at without a single false statement about who lived where.

This is a **vacancy** fiction — ground without a recognised title declared to belong to no one, and therefore to the state — and the classification is not in doubt. What is unusual, and what the close returns to, is that vacancy was reached for by a party that wanted neither the ground nor settlers to put on it.

What was actually divided in 1892: not land, but a revenue

Because the first settlement of Italian Somalia was not a division of ground at all. It was a division of a customs house, and the instrument is the concession of the twelfth of August 1892.

That document, read earlier for what it conveyed of sovereignty, is on a second reading a schedule of monopolies. Article I gives Italy or its representatives *seuls le droit d'acheter ou de disposer des terres publiques* — alone the right to buy or dispose of public lands — within the leased territories, three years before anyone had said what the public lands were. Article III permits the administering company to trade, hold property, build, and acquire land, houses and buildings by purchase or agreement in the named territories, *avec le consentement des propriétaires de ces maisons, terrains et bâtiments*, with the consent of the owners of those houses, lands and buildings. Article IV cedes the exclusive privilege of levying taxes on the inhabitants, of regulating commerce, transactions and navigation, of controlling the fisheries, of building roads, tramways, railways, canals, ports and telegraphs and taxing them, and of controlling or prohibiting imports. Article V establishes customs. Article VI grants the right to found banks *avec le privilège exclusif d'émettre des billets et de la monnaie d'or, d'argent et de cuivre* — with the exclusive privilege of issuing notes and gold, silver and copper coin. Article VIII cedes the *régie* of the customs for twenty-five years against forty thousand rupees on entry and forty thousand each quarter.

Read Articles III and I together and then read the 1895 regulation, and the sequence is exact. In 1892 the company may buy land only with the consent of the owners. In 1895 the company declares that where an owner is not ascertained there is no owner to consent. The consent requirement was not repealed; it was emptied. This is the ordinary technology of a settlement — the conversion performed first, the transfer following as its

consequence — except that here the conversion is not of a relation into a thing but of a relation into *a vacancy*, and the instrument doing it is a company by-law.

Meanwhile the actual money was in the tariff. The same 1895 regulation sets it out in Article 9: five per cent ad valorem on all imports except spirits above twenty per cent by volume, which pay twenty-five; and on exports, fifteen per cent on ivory, copal and rubber, twelve on sesame and groundnut, five on everything not scheduled, and a per-head duty on livestock leaving the country — camels, horses, donkeys, cattle, sheep and goats each at their own rate. Grain and pulses paid by the *ghisla*, a measure the regulation itself footnotes as three hundred and sixty pounds of sorghum. That schedule is the settlement's real content in the 1890s: a tax on the Somali export economy the Landscape described — the millet and sesame of the Shebelle, the hides and the herds — levied at the water's edge by a Milanese firm, on a coast leased from an Arab sultan, under a British protectorate, by a kingdom that could not walk ten miles inland.

The consideration, and who was inside

The third thing a settlement requires is to name the consideration: what the grantee owed in return. Here the answer is startling, and it inverts the usual shape.

Under the convention of the twenty-fifth of May 1898 — the definitive one, approved by law of the twenty-fourth of December 1899, no. 466 — the Kingdom of Italy undertook to pay the Benadir Company four hundred thousand gold francs a year to 1910 and three hundred and fifty thousand thereafter until 1946, and to give it free enjoyment of the mines with power to transfer concessions to third parties, and

> *la gratuita facoltà di occupare tutte le terre che saranno riconosciute demaniali alla presa di possesso da parte della Società*

> *the free faculty to occupy all the lands which shall be recognised as demanial on the Company's taking possession*

with the right to make concessions in use of those lands to Italians, or to dependent natives resident in the colony, for the duration of its management, and to foreigners with the government's approval. Note the verb. Not *declared* demanial, not *made* demanial: *recognised* as demanial. A decree presents itself as a decision; a law presents itself as a discovery, and this one discovers that the state has always owned the country.

Against that the Company undertook, in Article 9: to fly the national flag; to pay the Sultan of Zanzibar a hundred and twenty thousand rupees a year; to pay the annuities due to the Sultans of Obbia and Alula, three thousand six hundred Maria Theresa thalers in all; to maintain the buildings received from the government; **to keep at least six hundred guards for the internal security of the colony**; to administer justice; to apply the general acts of Berlin of 1885 and Brussels of 1890 in everything touching the slave trade and the commerce in firearms and spirits; and to run the postal service.

Stop on that list, because it is the most peculiar consideration the case turns up. What the Company owed was **the Kingdom of Italy's own international obligations.** The Brussels engagements that Italy had entered before seventeen signatories in 1890 — the ones the Landscape established as the entry fee to the club of powers permitted to administer African territory — were, from 1898, contractual duties of a Milanese textile syndicate with a share capital of one million lire in four thousand shares of two hundred and fifty, two-thirds of which had to stand in the names of Italian citizens. The treaty stipends of two Somali sultans were paid by a firm whose board was Sanseverino, Mylius, Crespi and Carminati. The Company appointed the colony's governors and sub-governors, subject to the government's approval; its statutes reserved five per cent of net profit to reserve, six per cent as ordinary dividend, and then ten per cent of the whole net profit to the board itself and another ten for gratuities to staff.

And now the inside/outside boundary. **No Somali was inside this settlement.** Not one. There is no grant to a chief, no recognition of an existing estate, no confirmation of a sultan in his lands, no native landholding class bought in and given something to lose. A settlement that buys an elite is a hinge; a settlement that buys nobody is a wall, and walls have to be manned — and Somalia is an instance of it, with the bill presented on schedule. What the Somali riverine population got from the settlement of the 1890s was a five per cent duty at the port and a company by-law transferring the freehold of the interior to a European government. What Italy got, within a decade, was the Biimaal war.

The two sultans of the north are the one apparent exception and they are not one. Their annuities were a salary for a treaty, not a grant of land they did not already hold; they were paid to be sovereigns rather than to be landlords; and the arrangement ended in 1925 with a naval blockade. The settlement made no Somali proprietor and therefore created no Somali with an interest in its survival.

Persons, and the courts

Two further instruments complete the picture of who owned what, and both concern people rather than fields.

The 1895 regulation's Article 6 provides that qadis shall be appointed at Giumbo, Torre and Itala, that only judgments written by those qadis and bearing the Company's official seal shall be recognised as valid and executed, that appeal lies first to the governor of the nearest town and finally to the Company's administrator, and that *la legge verrà applicata secondo le norme della Sccria* — the law shall be applied according to the rules of the sharia. Article 7 requires that all acts of mortgage, sale, transfer of property, loan, bill and promissory note be registered with one of those three qadis to acquire legal validity, at a registration tax of one per cent of the declared value.

Read that beside Article 5, which requires all titles and rights to immovable property to be registered at the Company's offices within one year of promulgation, published for thirty days in the village nearest the land so that claims and disputes may be brought, and provides that after the year has run **unregistered claims shall not be recognised as legal** unless the claimant can show sufficient cause. There is the whole architecture. A Somali remained a Muslim under a qadi in his marriage and his inheritance — the personal law preserved, and preserved sincerely, and later a plank of the robe — while the qadi himself became an appointee of a trading company, his seal the company's, his jurisdiction over conveyances a registry the company taxed, and any interest in land not brought to the company's office within twelve months by a population that could not read the notice and had never in its history recorded a title ceased to exist in law.

The third instrument concerns ownership of persons directly. On the second of March 1903 the Governor at Mogadishu, Emilio Dulio, issued an ordinance in eleven numbered clauses which turns out to say something narrower and more interesting than the anti-slavery robe around it would suggest. It prohibits buying, selling, pledging, and every transaction in slaves including gift, hire and exchange; prohibits importing slaves into the country and taking them out of it; provides that on a master's death slaves shall be inherited only by the children of free wives and that where there are none, all shall be free; frees all children born in the preceding thirteen years; permits any slave to redeem himself at a just price to be fixed by the Resident; declares that whatever a slave possesses by trade and by his own labour remains his absolute property; and provides that the slaves of a slave who is freed are *ipso facto* free.

What it does not do is abolish slavery. Clause seven leaves existing slaves in servitude and makes them heritable. The instrument abolishes the *trade* and sets the institution to die by attrition — precisely the *graduale abolizione della servitù domestica* that Article 4 of the 1895 regulation had promised eight years earlier. And the compilation in which the text survives adds, in a footnote, a fact that ought to be carried into the robe and never let go of: the abolition of the traffic through the Benadir and Kismayo had already been formally decreed by Sultan Barghash bin Said, in a rescript of January 1876, twenty-seven years before Italy did it. The Sultan's decree is reproduced immediately below Dulio's. On the same page, in the same official collection, the coloniser's founding humanitarian act is printed beneath the identical act of the sovereign he had displaced.

The governor who could not enforce a hunting licence

Before following the sentence forward, one document should be set beside it, because it establishes what the settlement of 1895 was worth on the ground five years later.

On the twenty-sixth of May 1900 the Governor of the Benadir, Emilio Dulio, circulated his residents at Merca, Brava and Giumbo about the London conference on the preservation of wild animals in Africa, to which Italy had adhered. He explained why he could do very little. In the colony, he wrote, hunting is practised almost solely by the natives and cannot therefore be regulated so long as the present government programme stands, which is to hold only a few garrisons in the most important coastal stations. In the interior

> *la nostra influenza è molto limitata; ed Ella sa che per occupare effettivamente tutto il territorio che da noi dipende ed esercitarvi quell'autorità che sarebbe nel dovere ed anche nella convenienza di una nazione europea civile, occorrerebbe almeno triplicare l'attuale numero di ascari.*

> *our influence is very limited; and you know that in order effectively to occupy all the territory which depends on us and to exercise there the authority which would be the duty and also the interest of a civilised European nation, it would be necessary at least to triple the present number of askari.*

Since that is impossible given the programme imposed by the Royal Government and the exiguous means at his disposal, he goes on, there is for the present no question of issuing general provisions for the natives, all the more since we would completely lack the force to

make them observed. He then bans hunting by Europeans and by his own staff, licenses it at twelve thalers a year, and fines contraveners.

Set the two documents side by side. In 1895 a company declares that every uncultivated acre in southern Somalia belongs to the Kingdom of Italy. In 1900 the Kingdom's governor writes to his own residents that Italian influence in the interior is very limited, that he would need three times the askari to occupy the territory that depends on him, and that he lacks the force to make any general rule observed at all. Both statements are official. Both are true of different things: the first of the register, the second of the country. It is the floor's finding restated in the language of property, and it is worth naming plainly — **a settlement can be complete on paper for a generation before a single acre changes hands, and the paper does not decay while it waits.**

The option exercised

Now the evolution, and it runs the way the case keeps running: the wants changed, the instrument did not have to.

The state took the colony in January 1905 for the reasons already given, and the law of the fifth of April 1908 united the southern possessions as *Somalia Italiana* and settled the division of colonial competence between parliament, the government of the Kingdom and the government of the colony. Between those two dates the object of the whole enterprise quietly changed. Declarations in parliament about the fertility of the Juba and the Shebelle, a run of publications urging the *messa in valore* of the Benadir, and the standing Italian habit of measuring the colony against the British and German protectorates next door produced, as the colony's own future governor recorded in 1909, a stream of individual applications for land concessions for agricultural cultivation. Nobody had needed to make new law for them to apply to. The land was already the Royal Italian Government's; it had been since a company said so in 1895.

Giacomo De Martino, governor from 1910 to 1916, is the hinge. He established the regime of agricultural concessions, first along the Italian bank of the Juba and then along the Shebelle; the enabling royal decree is that of the eighth of June 1911, no. 820. In 1912 he agreed with the Colonial Agricultural Institute at Florence for the training of agricultural staff and technical assistance, and the agronomist Romolo Onor set up the government's experimental farm at Genale to study the climate, the soil, the local labour

question and the productive possibilities of the southern alluvial plain. The Juba concessionaires came to about a dozen and grouped themselves in a Consorzio agricolo del Giuba supported by a government estate. The crop was cotton, and the men who took it up were Lombard cotton magnates and Italian landed nobility — which is to say, in several cases, the same interests that had held the Benadir Company a decade earlier, now acquiring as concessionaires the ground they had once administered as sovereigns.

Then the Fascist decade completes it. In 1920 Prince Luigi Amedeo of Savoy, Duke of the Abruzzi, founded the *Società Agricola Italo-Somala*, which by 1924 had a paid-up capital of thirty-five million lire and a concession of twenty-five thousand hectares in the Scidle district on the Shebelle, and built there the Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi — Villabruzzi — with a sugar refinery, a hospital, a church and a mosque, a school, a maternity house, an airfield, fifty-five kilometres of internal light railway, and a population given at nine thousand of whom a hundred were Italians. The railway from Mogadishu was pushed on to reach it, the last section opened in 1928. De Vecchi, arriving in 1923, created an Agrarian and Colonisation Office to order the concessions and administer irrigation water, and between 1924 and 1928 carried out the great works at Genale: a barrage on the Shebelle begun in October 1924 and completed on the twenty-seventh of October 1926, with a canal system, intended to irrigate a district of some twenty thousand hectares between Genale, Merca and the new settlement of Vittorio d'Africa, for concession to Italian colonists. Italian scholarship records that the Genale lands were distributed to De Vecchi's own Piedmontese Fascist associates; the phrase used of them in the secondary literature is that they were the men Mussolini himself called *i fascistissimi*, though the underlying source of that phrase has not been traced and it should be treated as reported rather than established.

And on the second of December 1935, by decree-law no. 2085, the Ministry of Colonies established the *Regia Azienda Monopolio Banane*. The reason was arithmetical: the depression had halved the cotton price after 1929, bananas had become the most remunerative crop the concessions could grow, and Somali bananas could not compete in a free market. So the market was closed. The RAMB took the transport and marketing of the fruit of the Genale and Villabruzzi concessions into a state monopoly under the Colonial Ministry, built depots in the principal Italian cities, and commissioned four refrigerated ships for the Mogadishu–Naples run. Italian banana consumption in 1939, the last normal year, reached four hundred and fifty thousand quintals.

Forty years after a trading company wrote that all uncultivated land without an ascertained owner belonged to the Royal Italian Government, the Shebelle valley was under an Italian dam, in Italian concessions, growing an Italian crop, carried in Italian ships, to a market from which every competitor had been legally excluded. No new fiction had been required at any point. The 1895 sentence covered all of it.

Reading the Somali settlement against the pattern

Three returns.

The contribution: a settlement fiction is an option, written early and exercised late — and the party that writes it need not want what it eventually takes. The usual reading is that which fiction a conqueror reaches for tells you what he actually wanted, and that vacancy is reached for where the conqueror wants the ground and has settlers to seat on it. On this case that inference fails, and the failure is instructive rather than fatal. Vacancy was declared in southern Somalia in March 1895 by a trading company that wanted customs revenue, had no settlers, no agricultural programme, and sixty-three armed men; it was ratified in advance by a foreign ministry that wanted a receipt to show parliament; and it lay unused for a quarter of a century. The party that exercised it — a Fascist state seating Piedmontese squadristi on an irrigated banana district — did not exist when it was written and shared none of the writer's objects. **What the fiction tells you, then, is not reliably what the conqueror wanted at the moment of writing; it is what the widest and cheapest available claim was, at a moment when writing it cost nothing.** So a settlement fiction is better read as an option than as an intention, and the exercise dated separately from the drafting. Where the two are decades apart, reading the drafting as evidence of purpose mis-describes the founding — and reading only the exercise misses that no new law was needed, which is the whole point. The corollary is a diagnostic: **a vacancy clause drafted broader than its author's use for it is the tell of a conqueror who does not yet know what the colony is for**, and its existence makes the later, harder taking legally frictionless.

This also answers, and answers against itself, the question the Landscape left open. The Landscape guessed that Italy came for the passage and not the ground, and that the object later changed. It did change, and the date can now be given — between about 1906 and 1911, in Rome and in the *Rivista Coloniale* rather than in Somalia — but the change

required no new settlement, because the settlement had been drawn wide enough in 1895 to fit whatever came.

The confirmation: a settlement that buys nobody is a wall. Where there is no native elite worth purchasing, the conqueror makes no enfeoffment, and an order that enfeoffs nobody must do all its own policing forever from outside. Somalia bears that out exactly and supplies the mechanism for why no purchase was made: there was nothing to purchase, because Somali authority was contract and not chair, and land was allocation and not estate, so there existed no class of native proprietors whose title could be re-sourced by an Italian grant. A recognition fiction — binding an elite by declaring that it already owns what it is being given — was structurally unavailable here: you cannot confirm a man in an estate in a society that has no estates. So Italy reached for vacancy not because it had settlers but because vacancy was the only one of the three fictions the ground permitted. **The variable selecting the fiction is not only what the conqueror wants; it is what the prior order's own tenure makes available to be faked.**

The complication: the personal law was preserved and the property law was captured, by the same instrument, in adjacent articles. This is worth naming because it is easy to read the preservation of the qadi courts as tolerance and the land clause as theft, and to treat them as separate policies pulling opposite ways. They are one policy. The 1895 regulation appoints the qadis, seals their judgments with the Company's stamp, routes their appeals to the Company's administrator, applies the sharia, and taxes every conveyance registered with them at one per cent — and in the article immediately before, extinguishes every unregistered claim to land after twelve months. A Somali kept his faith, his marriage law, his inheritance law and his judge, and lost the capacity to be the owner of anything the state might later want. It is worth holding as a general expectation where a conqueror rules a legally sophisticated but unregistered population: **expect the personal law to be preserved and the law of things to be captured, and expect the preservation to be genuine, cheap, and load-bearing for the robe** — which is where the robe picks it up.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. Article 1 (*Terre demaniali*) of the provisional regulation of 14 March 1895 issued by the Filonardi Company; the customs schedule of its Article 9; and its Articles 4, 5, 6 and 7 on slavery, the registration of immovable

property, the appointment of qadis and the registration of notarial acts, are quoted and paraphrased from the text printed in Carlo Rossetti, *Manuale di legislazione della Somalia italiana, volume secondo: Documenti 1892–1908*, published by the Colonial Studies Office of the Italian Ministry of Colonies (Rome, 1912), an official compilation now in the public domain. The same volume supplies the French text of the Italo-Zanzibari convention of 12 August 1892 (Articles I, III, IV, V, VI and VIII), the exchange of letters of 11 May 1893 constituting the Filonardi concession, the conventions of 15 April 1896, 24 January 1898 and 25 May 1898 with the Società anonima commerciale italiana del Benadir together with the Company's statutes of 25 June 1896, the governorial circular of 26 May 1900 on hunting, and the governorial ordinance of 2 March 1903 on the prohibition of the slave trade and the liberation and redemption of slaves, with the footnote reproducing Sultan Barghash's decree abolishing the traffic through Kismayo and the Benadir. The compilation's own prefatory note records that most of the commissarial and governorial decrees it contains had never been published at all before 1912, having been promulgated only by posting in the offices of the colony, and that it was assembled from copies in the archives of the Central Directorate of Colonial Affairs; it states plainly that it has no official character. The translations are given here from the originals.

Two textual cautions. The 1895 regulation carries a note that it had been approved in advance by the Minister of Foreign Affairs by despatch of 24 October 1893, seventeen months before its own date; the sequence is odd but the note is the compilation's and is reported as it stands. The Barghash decree is given in the compilation twice, dated 13 January 1876 in the schedule of decrees and 15 January 1876 in the transcribed text, both rendered from 17 Dhu al-Hijja 1292; the discrepancy is in the source and nothing here turns on it.

Reported rather than quoted. Royal Decree 8 June 1911, no. 820, establishing the agricultural concession regime, is named on the authority of a citation in the recent scholarship on Somali banana cultivation; its text has not been consulted and no phrase of it is quoted. Since it is the instrument by which the 1895 option was first exercised at scale, it should be obtained before the extraction relies on it further. Governor De Martino's own account of the beginnings of land policy at the Benadir, published in the *Rivista Coloniale* in 1909, and the contemporary Italian literature urging the *messa in valore* of the colony, are described from Guadagni's citations rather than read directly.

The decree-law of 2 December 1935, no. 2085, establishing the Regia Azienda Monopolio Banane, is identified by number and date and is not quoted. The assertion that the Genale concessions were distributed to De Vecchi's Piedmontese Fascist associates, and the phrase *i fascistissimi* attributed to Mussolini, are reported from a secondary Italian article which itself cites a further source not traced here; the substance is consistent with the general scholarship but the phrase should not be quoted as verified.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. Marco Guadagni, "Colonial Origins of the Public Domain in Southern Somalia (1892–1912)", *Journal of African Law* 22 (1978), is the foundational treatment of the settlement's subject and the source of its framing, including the finding — quoted here in substance, not in words — that agricultural exploitation was not the determining aim of the original Italian occupation, which regarded Somalia primarily as a political and commercial area and as the southern access route to the Ethiopian plateau. Only the article's abstract and its footnotes have been read; the body is behind a subscription and should be obtained. Lee V. Cassanelli on land, labour and servitude in the Benadir, and Catherine Besteman and Francesca Declich on the riverine south, underlie the account of the prior tenure. Angelo Del Boca and Gian Luca Podestà are the standard Italian authorities for the concession economy. The account of the SAIS, the Genale barrage, Villabruzzi and the RAMB has been assembled in part from Italian colonial-commemorative sites which reproduce documents and figures of value inside an openly apologetic frame; the concrete details taken from them have been used and their framing has not.

Contested figures, given as ranges or flagged. The SAIS concession is given by Italian sources as twenty-five thousand hectares with a paid-up capital of thirty-five million lire by 1924, and the Genale district as some twenty thousand hectares; these are the concessionaires' and the administration's own figures for areas granted, not for areas actually brought under cultivation, and the two diverge widely in every plantation colony. The extraction will need cultivated hectarage and should not reuse these. The Villabruzzi population of about nine thousand, of whom a hundred Italians, is an Italian source's figure for the late 1920s and is not independently corroborated. The Italian banana consumption figure of four hundred and fifty thousand quintals for 1939 is metropolitan consumption, not Somali export, and the two should not be conflated; Somali export tonnages have deliberately not been given here and are established with the extraction. The number of Juba concessionaires, given as about a dozen, is approximate in the source.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

MODULE 3

PRINTED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME

The robe — how to identify the audience a legitimating story was cut for by asking which of a colony's documents left the building, and what happened when the one instrument that travelled turned out to have an audit schedule attached.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Two shelves

In July 1912 Carlo Rossetti, Royal Colonial Agent and head of the Colonial Studies Office at the Italian Ministry of Colonies, published the second volume of his *Manuale di legislazione della Somalia italiana*, collecting the whole legislation of the colony from the beginning of Italian action down to the constitutive law of 5 April 1908. The settlement came out of that volume. Something else comes out of it too, and it is not in any of the decrees. It is in the fifth line of the editor's prefatory note.

> *La pubblicazione del Bullettino ufficiale della Somalia italiana, essendosi iniziata il 1° luglio 1910, i decreti commissariali o governatoriali compresi in questo volume non furono pubblicati che mediante affissione negli uffici della Colonia e per la maggior parte sono essi qui stampati per la prima volta. Alcuni soltanto vennero già inseriti in raccolte speciali (Libri verdi, raccolte trattati, ecc.), e altri pochi, relativi alla schiavitù, comunicati annualmente all'Ufficio speciale di Bruxelles (Atto generale della Conferenza di Bruxelles, art. LXXXII), furono pubblicati nelle raccolte annuali dei* Documents relatifs à la répression de la traite des esclaves.

> *The publication of the Official Bulletin of Italian Somalia having begun on 1 July 1910, the commissarial and governorial decrees contained in this volume were published only by posting in the offices of the Colony, and for the most part they are printed here for the first time. Some only were already inserted in special collections (Green Books, treaty collections, etc.), and a few others, relating to*

> *slavery, communicated annually to the special Office at Brussels (General Act of the Conference of Brussels, art. LXXXII), were published in the annual collections of the* Documents relatifs à la répression de la traite des esclaves.

Read that as a description of two shelves and the module writes itself.

On the first shelf is the law of Italian Somalia between 1892 and 1908: the declaration that all uncultivated land without an ascertained owner belonged to the Kingdom of Italy; the customs tariff; the registration deadline that extinguished unrecorded claims; the appointment of the qadis; the hunting licence; the ordinances of the governors on everything a colony does. Nobody outside the colony read any of it. It was promulgated by being nailed to a wall in Mogadishu, Merca or Brava, in a language almost nobody who passed the wall could read, and it stayed unpublished for between four and twenty years, appearing in print for the first time in a ministry handbook in 1912.

On the second shelf is a much shorter list: the measures relating to slavery, communicated every year to a special office in Brussels under an article of a treaty, and printed there in an annual series that ran, at Hayez in Brussels, from 1893 to 1914, and was addressed to all the signatory powers.

That is the robe. Not a doctrine, not a catechism, not a story anyone told the Somalis — **a bibliographical fact.** In this colony you can identify the legitimating claim, and the audience it was cut for, by asking which documents left the building, and the answer is that almost none did except the ones about slaves.

The coin the jury minted

The opening landscape established why. Italy in 1889 was not a power seeking to persuade a conquered population; it was an applicant seeking admission to a club, and the club had written down its entrance fee. What has to be added is that the fee came with a filing system.

The General Act of Brussels of 2 July 1890 does not merely declare against the slave trade. Its closing articles build an apparatus for watching the signatories, and the operative provisions are worth reading in the flat administrative English of the contemporary official translation. Article LXXXI requires the powers to communicate to one another the laws and administrative regulations they enact in execution of the Act, together with

> *Statistical information concerning the slave-trade, slaves arrested and liberated, and the traffic in fire-arms, ammunition, and alcoholic liquors.*

Article LXXXII centralises the exchange in a special office attached to the foreign office at Brussels, to which the international bureau at Zanzibar forwards its annual report. And then, in Article LXXXIV, the machinery closes:

> *The documents and information shall be collected and published periodically, and addressed to all the signatory powers. This publication shall be accompanied every year by an analytical table of the legislative, administrative, and statistical documents mentioned in Article LXXXI and LXXXIII.*

An analytical table. Every year. Circulated to seventeen states, with the office's expenses shared among them.

This is the pattern's proposition that legitimacy is always borrowed from a currency the audience already honours, and it is borrowed here in the most literal available sense: not from a value the powers held in the abstract but from **an instrument they had drafted, whose terms they had set, and whose observance they had arranged to publish annually in a table.** Britain had spent seventy years and a navy establishing that this was the coin; Italy, needing recognition more than it needed anything, paid in it because it was the only coin the counter would take. And because the payment took the form of a filing obligation, the robe of Italian Somalia has a documentary shape that most robes in the series do not: it can be counted.

The robe used as a weapon

The clearest evidence of which audience mattered is not what Italy filed but what Italy did with the instrument when it wanted something.

On 20 April 1895 the Italian Foreign Minister, Baron Blanc, issued a circular despatch to the signatory powers of the Brussels Act, calling their attention to the provisions of that Act concerning the slave trade and the prohibition on introducing arms and ammunition into Ethiopia, and to the necessity of causing those international provisions to be observed and respected. The Italian ambassador at Washington transmitted it to the American Secretary of State the following month. The supporting material assembled with it included the treaty engagements of a Danakil sultan, the case of a French citizen

expelled from Ethiopia for publishing accounts of Menelik's slave-raiding among the Wolaita, and an extract from a letter in which Menelik asked Crispi to have the Italian ambassador at Brussels speak for him and to see that his state was not deprived of the arms and ammunition it needed.

Read the date. This is eleven months before Adwa. Italy, preparing a war against Ethiopia, went to the signatories of the anti-slavery act and asked them to enforce against Menelik the clause that closed the arms trade — on the ground that Menelik was a slaver. The Act's own Article I lists the restriction of the importation of modern firearms as the seventh of the most effective means of counteracting the slave trade; the effect of enforcing it against a sovereign African state preparing to defend itself against invasion needs no comment from me and got none from the powers.

Whatever else is uncertain about the Somali robe, this is not: **a claim you deploy diplomatically against a rival, to a bench of foreign governments, is a claim you believe is current with them.** The revealed-preference test is satisfied without needing to inspect anyone's sincerity. Italy spent real diplomatic capital on the abolitionist instrument at the moment of maximum need, in a direction that had nothing to do with either the Somalis or the Italian electorate.

What the metropole was told

The second audience was at home, and it was addressed differently — not with a filing obligation but with a distinction.

Mancini, who had made the case for Italian nationality and then made the case for Italian colonies, resolved the contradiction by dividing colonialism into two kinds: the colonialism of conquest, command and subjection, as the Spanish and Portuguese had practised it in America, and the colonialism of protection and guardianship, exercised by civilised nations for the benefit of the uncivilised. Italy's, of course, was the second. To the Chamber in January 1885 he put it as a competition Italy could not honourably decline:

> *E come potremmo noi chiudere gli occhi a questa gara generosa, che ormai si manifesta fra tutte le grandi nazioni d'Europa, per associarsi in una specie d'impresa comune e solidale di mondiale incivilimento, in un'alta missione educatrice di tanta parte del genere umano che abita il vasto continente africano?*

> *And how could we close our eyes to this generous contest, which is now displaying itself among all the great nations of Europe, to associate themselves in a kind of common and joint enterprise of world civilisation, in a high educative mission towards so great a part of the human race that inhabits the vast African continent?*

Note where the sentence puts its weight. The argument is not that Africans need Italy; it is that Italy cannot be the one European state standing outside a contest the others have entered. He goes on to say exactly that — that Italy alone must not go on watching this sort of pacific crusade from a distance with lazy indifference, refusing to pay its contribution, for then Italy's credit would suffer and it would not sit worthily in the assembly of the great civilised nations. **The metropolitan robe and the international robe are the same robe seen from the inside: what Italians were asked to believe was that the powers were watching.**

Beneath that sat the domestic alliance the Landscape described and which needs only restating. Cardinal Lavigerie's anti-slavery crusade of 1888, Leo XIII's *In plurimis* of that May, and the founding in Rome the same year of the Società Antischiavista d'Italia gave a government whose capital the Pope refused to recognise the one subject on which Italian Catholics would bless its expansion. A state that could not obtain the Church's acknowledgment of Rome could obtain its blessing for Africa, and did.

And from about 1906 a third metropolitan layer accumulated on top: the developmentalist literature. Parliamentary declarations about the fertility of the Juba and the Shebelle, pamphlets on the *messa in valore* of the Benadir, comparisons with the British and German protectorates next door — a body of writing whose function was to generate applications for concessions. That is the robe changing to fit the want, and the change is dateable: the language of guardianship acquires an agronomy.

The audit fires once, and from the wrong direction

The Landscape closed by proposing something and leaving it open. Where a latecomer's title rests on a written undertaking about his own conduct, it argued, his legitimating claim acquires a failure mode the ordinary colonial claim does not have — it can be breached, and the breaching party is the conqueror or his agent, not the conquered. Whether the machinery ever did anything, the Landscape said, was a question for later

modules. This is the later module, and the answer is: **once, decisively, and not through the machinery.**

The Brussels apparatus collected paper. There is no evidence in anything examined here that the special office, the analytical table, or the bureau at Zanzibar ever produced a finding against Italy, asked Italy a question, or caused anything to happen in the Benadir. What happened instead was that the Società Antischiavista d'Italia — a private Catholic association in Rome, one of the national bodies thrown off by Lavigerie's crusade — commissioned the explorer Luigi Robecchi Bricchetti to go and look, and he went, in 1903, and wrote letters home which the Society published the following year as *Dal Benadir*. A naval investigation reported that slaves were entering the Benadir ports, that the last had come in as recently as December, and that slaves were bought and sold in the towns not only under the eyes of the Italian authorities but on the registers of the qadis of Mogadishu. A commission the Benadir Company itself appointed to disprove the charges — Chiesi and Travelli — confirmed them. A press campaign followed, then a parliamentary debate, then the government's denunciation of the 1898 convention, and on 13 January 1905 the purchase of full sovereignty from Zanzibar for a hundred and forty-four thousand pounds sterling.

Set that beside the pattern's expectation and the refinement states itself. The manual holds that where an order answers to a distant metropole, the seam may be held open by concealment or by indifference, and that an uninteresting fact is safer than a censored one. Here the fact was not uninteresting to one specific constituency, and that constituency had a subscription list, a cardinal's imprimatur, and an explorer it could pay to buy a ticket. **The compliance schedule's enforcement came from inside the metropole, not from the inspectorate the treaty had built.** The bureau at Brussels collected returns; the Antischiavista sent a man. And what made the man's report actionable was not that it revealed a crime under Italian law — it revealed a breach of the engagements Italy had contracted before seventeen states, which the state had guaranteed and then delegated to a firm.

So the Landscape's proposition survives, in an amended form worth carrying: **a written undertaking about one's own conduct does create a distinctive failure mode, but the party that exploits it is not the foreign inspectorate. It is whichever domestic faction already cared, now armed with a standard it did not have to argue for.**

That is why the robe cut for the powers turned out to be dangerous at home: it handed the Italian abolitionists a yardstick their own government had signed.

The consequence should be stated without softening in either direction. Italy took its colony back from a chartered company because that company was complicit in slaving; men who had been slaves were freed; the freeing was recorded and reported. And the same act made Italy the direct sovereign of the country whose river valleys it would spend the next thirty years converting into concessions. Both halves are true and neither cancels the other. The arithmetic between them is the study.

What the abolition ordinance said, and what was printed beneath it

Now the robe's central claim, at its strongest and in its own words, with the two things standing behind it.

On 2 March 1903 the Governor at Mogadishu, Emilio Dulio, issued the ordinance already examined for its treatment of persons. Its eleven clauses prohibit the purchase, sale, pledging, gift, hire and exchange of slaves; prohibit their introduction into the country and their removal from it; free all children born in the preceding thirteen years; allow any slave to redeem himself at a price fixed by the Resident; guarantee to the slave whatever he has gained by trade and his own labour as his absolute property; and free, *ipso facto*, the slaves of any slave who is freed. It is a real instrument with real effects and it should be credited as such.

Two things stand behind it, and both are printed in the same official volume.

The first is that it does not abolish slavery. Clause seven leaves existing slaves in servitude and makes them heritable by the children of free wives. This is the *graduale abolizione della servitù domestica* that Article 4 of the Filonardi Company's regulation had promised in 1895 — abolition of the traffic now, extinction of the institution by attrition later. The distinction is not a quibble: it is the difference between an act that ends a trade and an act that frees a population, and the robe was drawn on the credit of the second while performing the first.

The second is a footnote. Beneath Dulio's ordinance the compilation prints, under the heading *Nota*, the decree by which the abolition of the traffic through the Benadir had already been formally sanctioned by the Sultan of Zanzibar:

> *Nel nome di Dio clemente e misericordioso: Da Bargasc ben Said a tutti i nostri amici gli abitanti di Chisimaio e sue dipendenze... noi, a ristabilire il nostro governo e la nostra autorità abbiamo decretato l'abolizione della tratta a traverso i nostri territori del Bénadir e del distretto di Chisimaio, ed abbiamo comandato al nostro governatore di mantenere forza a quest'ordine e di non permettere che schiavi passino a traverso i territori su menzionati.*

> *In the name of God the clement and the merciful: From Barghash bin Said to all our friends the inhabitants of Kismayo and its dependencies... we, to re-establish our government and our authority, have decreed the abolition of the traffic through our territories of the Benadir and the district of Kismayo, and have commanded our governor to maintain force to this order and not to permit slaves to pass through the territories above named.*

Written in the hand of Zahir on 17 Dhu al-Hijja 1292 — January 1876. Twenty-seven years before Dulio, on the same coast, in the same ports, by the sovereign Italy displaced.

This has to be handled with the discipline the recursion demands and it is easy to get wrong in both directions. It does not show that Italian abolition was fraudulent: Barghash's decree was very imperfectly enforced, the traffic manifestly continued, and it was continuing under Italian administration in 1903 too, which is the whole point of the scandal. What it shows is narrower and harder. **The claim on which Italy's international title rested had already been made, in identical terms, by the power whose title Italy had bought** — and the Italian ministry knew it, printed it, and printed it as a footnote. The robe was not a new proposition offered to the world. It was an existing proposition transferred with the leasehold, and enforced, eventually, rather better.

The audience that was never addressed, and the one that read it correctly

Against all of that, the Somali side of the ledger is nearly empty, and the emptiness is itself the finding.

There is, in the record examined, no Italian attempt before the 1920s to persuade Somalis of anything. There was no state school system worth the name. There was almost no missionary activity: the Catholic presence in Italian Somalia remained weak until the 1920s, and the scholarship attributes that to two causes, lack of resources and the

anticlerical attitude of the liberal colonial state itself. The sharia was preserved and the qadis kept — but that preservation, as the settlement established, was a capture of the notarial function by a trading company whose seal validated the judgments, and it was administration rather than persuasion. The revealed-preference test cuts both ways and here it cuts cleanly: **Italy spent nothing on legitimating itself to the Somalis, which is a finding about what it thought it needed, and it turned out to be right about the short run and wrong about the cost.**

Because one Somali audience read the robe with complete accuracy and acted on it. The Landscape established that the servitude of the riverine south was real, that clan authority over dependent cultivators was structural to the valley economy, and that Merca was the centre of Biimaal country. When the Benadir Company began to move against the traffic, and when the state's first military governor followed the company's fall with a decree prohibiting the slave trade in territories under Italian jurisdiction, the Biimaal besieged Merca from April 1904 to January 1905 and fought a coalition war for four more years. The scholarship is agreed that the abolitionist measures, and the reports that immediate and general abolition was coming, are the proximate cause. Nobody was deceived. The people whose economy the instrument was aimed at understood it exactly as it was meant, described it accurately, and went to war over it — which is what the pattern's discipline says colonised populations generally do with these instruments, and which sits oddly beside the fact that the same instrument was, in Brussels, a line in an analytical table.

Two more robes, and a retreat

The Fascist period adds a third layer and then reverses it, and the sequence matters: not three simultaneous robes but three consecutive ones.

De Vecchi landed on 8 December 1923. Three weeks later, on the twenty-eighth, the first stone was laid of a cathedral. Built between then and 1928 to the design of the engineer Antonio Vandone di Cortemilia, modelled on the Norman cathedral of Cefalù, cruciform, with two bell towers of thirty-seven and a half metres, it was the largest Christian church in East Africa and it was inaugurated on 1 March 1928 by Umberto of Savoy, Prince of Piedmont, in the presence of the standard of the city of Turin, with a copy of Turin's Madonna della Consolata inside it. Of the model, De Vecchi is quoted as writing that it was inspired by

> *la cattedrale di Cefalù, simbolo della riconquista cristiana della Sicilia, magnifico monumento della arte nostra e dello spirito nettamente cattolico, restauratore dei valori spirituali del fascismo*

> *the cathedral of Cefalù, symbol of the Christian reconquest of Sicily, magnificent monument of our art and of the distinctly Catholic spirit, restorer of the spiritual values of Fascism*

and *La Stampa*, previewing the Prince's visit on 22 February 1928, described the consecration as the culminating event of the journey and one of the most formidable works of the Regime, perhaps the clearest and most lasting example of its religious policy:

> *In Somalia il conte De Vecchi di Val Cismon ha voluto che accanto al regno dello scudo sabaudo e del littorio, fosse instaurato il regno della croce.*

> *In Somalia Count De Vecchi di Val Cismon has willed that beside the reign of the Savoy shield and the lictor's fasces, the reign of the cross should be established.*

Identify the audience by the vocabulary. Cefalù is a reference legible to Italians and to nobody else; the Christian reconquest of Sicily from the Arabs is a story about Italy; the standard of Turin is a municipal object; the Prince of Piedmont is a domestic institution. The building sits in a wholly Muslim city and is addressed, in every one of its citations, over the heads of that city's inhabitants to the metropole. It is the clearest instance in the whole case of a robe in stone cut for the people paying for the conquest — and, in an ugly detail reported in local Sicilian and Somali-Italian accounts that could not be verified against any scholarly source and is therefore not relied on, it is said to have been built with the labour of Abyssinian and Majeerteen prisoners.

And then, within three years, the policy reversed. The recent scholarship on missionary schooling in Somalia finds that under De Vecchi church and state cooperated in an active expansion of missionary-run education and assimilationist teaching, and that his successor Guido Corni, governor from 1928, switched to curriculum adaptation and **discouraged evangelisation**; that Catholic teachers thereafter incorporated positive references to Islam into their curricula in order to attract Muslim pupils; and that under Corni and Maurizio Rava in the early 1930s the administration turned to a policy of assimilation resting on respect for the tribal and social structure and for Islam as the religion of these subjects.

So the "respect for Islam" layer of the Somali robe is not a founding accommodation and never was. **It is a retreat, dated 1928–31, from a Christianising push that had run for five years and produced a cathedral, some mission schools, an orphanage and a foundling home, and no Somalis.** That correction matters for what follows on formation, because it means the native counter-formation was not merely left standing by a coloniser who never tried; it was left standing by a coloniser who tried, briefly and expensively, and stopped.

Reading the Somali robe against the pattern

The contribution: publication is the tell, and the ratio is the measurement. The field manual carries publication-as-tell and concealment-as-tell on its list of findings available but not yet folded in, pending a second case. This is the second case, and it confirms them with a mechanism sharp enough to be operational. The manual's existing instruction is to identify the robe by reconstructing the doctrine — quoting the creed, the decree, the accession formula. That works where an order preached. Where an order did not preach, as here, the instruction returns nothing, and a study can conclude there was no robe when in fact there was a very precise one aimed somewhere the study was not looking.

The operational form is this. **Ask of a colonial order's whole documentary output: which parts of it were transmitted beyond the colony, to whom, on what schedule, and under what obligation — and the answer identifies the robe and its audience without any need to read a word of doctrine.** In Italian Somalia the ratio is stark enough to state as a fact rather than an impression: of the entire legislative record from 1892 to 1908, everything was posted on office walls and printed for the first time in a ministry handbook in 1912, except the slavery measures, which were sent to Brussels every year and published there for seventeen states. One category of document had a foreign readership. Every other category had a wall.

Two corollaries follow. First, **where the transmitted subset is defined by a treaty obligation rather than chosen, the robe is not merely addressed to an audience — it is audited by one**, and the study should look for the audit and date it. Second, and more useful for the corpus: **the tell is the ratio, not the fact of publication.** Every colonial administration published something. What identifies the robe is the disproportion between what travelled and what did not, and that disproportion is usually

recoverable from bibliographies, editors' notes and source citations rather than from the documents themselves — which means it is recoverable in cases where the doctrine is thin or absent altogether.

The amendment to the Landscape's proposition: the audit fires, but not from the inspectorate. The Landscape proposed that a title resting on a written undertaking about one's own conduct acquires a failure mode exposed to the incumbents' inspection. It half holds. The exposure is real and it was realised — a colony changed hands in 1905 because a guarantee had been breached. But the party that realised it was not the special office at Brussels, which appears to have done nothing but collate. It was a Catholic voluntary society in Rome that paid an explorer's passage. **The refinement: an international compliance schedule works, when it works, by arming a domestic faction with a standard it does not have to argue for.** The treaty's value to the objectors was not enforcement; it was that it made the objection unanswerable in the objectors' own parliament. Test this wherever a colonial power has signed a self-binding humanitarian instrument, and expect the enforcing agent to be at home.

The confirmations, stated as confirmations. Legitimacy borrowed and never minted: confirmed, and in the most literal available form, since Italy borrowed a claim its predecessor sovereign had already published in 1876 and the powers had already codified in 1890. More than one robe for more than one audience: confirmed, with the audiences separable by vocabulary — Brussels got an analytical table, the Chamber got a generous contest among great nations, the Italians of Mogadishu got the cathedral of Cefalù, and the Somalis got nothing at all until a governor in 1928 built a church and his successor in 1931 told the missionaries to stop. The fiction is aimed at the metropole and not the governed: confirmed, and here so completely that the governed were never addressed, which cost Italy the Biimaal war and eventually rather more.

And the discipline the whole method insists on, which this case tests hard. Do not read legal fiction as fraud. The abolition was real; the Society was sincere; the explorer went; the company fell; people were freed. The robe worked as legitimation precisely because it was, in the one respect the powers audited, substantially honoured. What stands on the record is only that of everything Italy did in Somalia, this was the part with a foreign readership — and that the freed population would shortly be re-bound to the fields by an entirely different instrument, promulgated by being posted on a wall.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The prefatory note to Carlo Rossetti, *Manuale di legislazione della Somalia italiana, volume secondo: Documenti 1892–1908* (Rome, Ministry of Colonies, Colonial Studies Office, 1912), and the governorial ordinance of 2 March 1903 with its accompanying note reproducing Sultan Barghash bin Said's decree, are quoted from that volume, an official Italian government publication in the public domain. Articles LXXXI, LXXXII and LXXXIV of the General Act of the Brussels Conference of 2 July 1890 are quoted from the contemporary official English text; the Act is in the public domain and its Article I, Article II and Article IV were quoted in the Landscape from the French original with the same official translation. Mancini's speech of 27 January 1885 is quoted in Italian as reproduced, with citation to the parliamentary edition of his speeches, in Tullio Scovazzi's chapter in *Political and legal aspects of Italian colonialism in Somalia* (2020); his distinction between two kinds of colonialism, from a speech of 30 June 1887, is paraphrased from the same source rather than quoted. Translations are from the originals.

Reported rather than quoted, and flagged as such. Baron Blanc's circular despatch of 20 April 1895 to the signatories of the Brussels Act is described from the covering note by which the Italian ambassador at Washington transmitted it to the Secretary of State, printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895*, together with the editorial footnotes there listing the supporting material; the circular's own text has not been read and no phrase of it is quoted. The passage attributed to De Vecchi on the cathedral of Cefalù, and the sentence from *La Stampa* of 22 February 1928, are quoted as they are reproduced on Italian colonial-commemorative and local-history websites; neither original has been consulted directly, and while both are period material out of copyright, the wording is given as those reproductions give it and should be checked before it is relied on further. The claim that the Mogadishu cathedral was built using Abyssinian and Majeerteen prisoners appears on such sites and is not corroborated by any scholarly source consulted; it is mentioned and expressly not relied on. Governor Dulio's first name is given as Emilio in the chronologies and as F. or E. in the signature lines of his own circulars as reproduced; the discrepancy is in the sources.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the Catholic missionary presence and its reversal — the weakness of missions before the 1920s owing to the liberal state's anticlericalism, the cooperation of church and state under De Vecchi and the

Consolata Fathers, Corni's switch to curriculum adaptation and his discouragement of evangelisation, and the incorporation of positive Islamic references into mission curricula — Caterina Scalvedi, "Cruce et Aratro: Fascism, Missionary Schools, and Labor in 1920s Italian Somalia" (2020) and her subsequent work on Catholic teachers and Muslim students in Italian Somalia. Lucia Ceci, *Il vessillo e la croce: colonialismo, missioni cattoliche e Islam in Somalia (1903–1924)*, is the standard treatment of the earlier period and has been used at second hand only; it should be read before the formation module. For the Società Antischiavista d'Italia and its relation to Lavigerie's crusade and to Italian colonial expansion, Lorenzo Ettorre and Alessandro Di Meo, and Amalia Ribi Forclaz, *Humanitarian Imperialism*, as in the Landscape. For the Benadir slavery scandal and the Chiesi–Travelli inquiry, and for the abolitionist measures as the proximate cause of the Biimaal rising, the standard accounts by Robert L. Hess and Angelo Del Boca, and Lee V. Cassanelli on the Benadir economy. Robecchi Bricchetti's *Dal Benadir: lettere illustrate alla Società Antischiavista d'Italia* (Milan, 1904) is public domain and is described here from citations in the scholarship; it has not been read directly and no passage of it is quoted, which is a real gap, since it is the single most important text of the Italian abolitionist robe and the suppression module will need it.

Contested figures and open questions. No figures are relied on here. Two questions are left open and should be recorded as open. First, it has not been established what Italy actually filed at Brussels in any given year, or whether the annual analytical tables recorded the Benadir at all in the years when the traffic was continuing; the *Documents relatifs à la répression de la traite des esclaves* (Brussels, Hayez, 1893–1914) survives and would settle it, and the answer would considerably sharpen or considerably damage the argument made here. Second, the claim that the special office produced no finding against Italy is an argument from the silence of the sources consulted, not from an examination of the Brussels series, and should be treated as provisional until that series is read.

MODULE 4

A PERFECTLY ITALIAN EDUCATION

Formation — the one qualification for admission that Italian law actually named, the school system that was capped at the third year so that nobody could meet it, and the thousand-year-old formation running underneath which supplied the men who fought the conquest.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The clause

On 6 July 1933 the Italian parliament passed law no. 999, the *Ordinamento organico per l'Eritrea e la Somalia*. Its Article 18 addressed a small and awkward category of person: the child born in Eritrea or Somalia to unknown parents, where somatic characteristics and other indications suggested that one parent had been of the white race. Such a person, on reaching his eighteenth year, might assume Italian citizenship — on conditions. One of the conditions, and the one that matters here, was that he should have had

> *una educazione perfettamente italiana*
>
> *a perfectly Italian education*

Read that clause slowly, because it puts in statute something that usually has to be inferred.

This collection holds, across every colonial case it has run, that a metropole will not form the population it conquers, because forming them would mean admitting them — teaching a man the metropole's language, law, history and self-understanding produces a person with a claim, and the claim is expensive. The proposition is normally established the hard way, from budgets and enrolment figures and the absence of a ladder, and a sceptic can always answer that the schools were simply never built because money was short and nobody thought about it.

Here that answer is closed off. **Italian law named formation as the qualification for admission, in those words, in a statute governing Somalia.** Whatever else the administration in Mogadishu did or failed to do about schools, it was operating in a legal order which had written down that a perfectly Italian education was the thing that could make a person Italian. And in the same decade, in the same colony, under the same government, Somali children were barred from proceeding beyond the third year of elementary school.

What follows is that arithmetic and what was formed instead.

What a Somali child was actually formed by

Begin with the system that was running, because it never stopped running and because the pattern's whole point about formation is that no child goes unformed. A person who received no formation at all would not be a free man; he would be feral. The question is never whether a population is formed but by whom, and in this colony the answer for the overwhelming majority is: by an apparatus Italy neither built, controlled, staffed, funded, nor for most of its tenure even attempted to compete with.

The institution at the base of it is the *dugsi*, the Qur'anic school. It teaches in Arabic; it takes children young; its method is memorisation of the Qur'an, with Arabic letters, and then, for those who continue, jurisprudence, theology and grammar. It requires no building, no ministry, no examination board and no salary line — a teacher, a shade tree or a room, wooden boards and ink. It existed in the coastal towns and it existed among the pastoral clans of the interior, and it existed precisely where the Italian state did not, which is nearly everywhere. Modern assessments of Somali education still describe the dugsi as the system that teaches the greatest number of children, enjoys the highest parental support, and is frequently the only schooling accessible to nomadic families at all. That was more true in 1910 than it is now.

Above the dugsi stood the Sufi orders, and here the formation acquires an institutional architecture that repays attention because it is the architecture Italy would later imitate without acknowledging. Three orders were prominent: the Qadiriyya, the oldest, carried into the Somali regions from Hadramawt in the early sixteenth century and spread through the southern interior in the nineteenth; the Ahmadiyya-Idrisiyya; and the Salihiyya, which became the most militant under colonial pressure. Membership was

nominal for most Somalis and rigorous for few, which is the ordinary shape of a naturalised religious order everywhere. But the orders did something more than teach. They founded the *jama'a* — agricultural religious settlements, communities of families holding land and farming it under a shaykh, with the school, the mosque, the tomb and the liturgical year built into the settlement's fabric. The first Somali *jama'a* is dated to 1819, when Shaykh Ibrahim Hassan Jebro acquired land on the Juba and established one; by the later nineteenth century they were a familiar feature of the riverine south.

The exemplar is Shaykh Uways al-Barawi, born at Brava about 1847 to a poor family, who went to Baghdad in 1870 to study under a Qadiri master descended from the order's founder, returned with a reputation that made him head of the Qadiriyya in Somalia and gave the sub-order his name, moved inland and founded an agricultural town he called Beled al-Amin, and to which — as the standard account has it — nomad and farmer alike came, bringing livestock and produce. He wrote devotional poetry in Arabic and, wanting the hymns in the language his people actually spoke, worked out a phonetic system of his own for writing Somali. He was killed in 1909.

Hold that last detail against a fact the closing pages will return to. Somali had no official written script until 1972. A shaykh at Brava was devising one in the 1890s so that religious verse could be sung in it. In fifty-two years of Italian rule the colonial state did not produce one, and did not want one.

The calendar the module is required to reconstruct follows from all this and can be given briefly, because it is not obscure. The Somali year ran on two overlaid cycles. One was pastoral and had nothing to do with anybody's doctrine — *jilaal*, the hard dry season; *gu*, the long rains and the calving; *hagaa*, the dry monsoon; *dayr*, the short rains — and it governed movement, marriage, debt and war. The other was Islamic: the five daily prayers, the Friday assembly, the fast of Ramadan and the two Eids, the mawlid of the Prophet, and the local pilgrimages to the tombs of shaykhs, which in the Benadir were numerous and which are the point at which the universal calendar becomes a specifically Somali one. The two cycles were not in tension; they had been interleaved for centuries.

And here the recursion has to be stated once, exactly and without either debunking or sentimentality. This formation was itself a former conquest's, brought by sea and by trade and by the sword to a Cushitic pastoral world, and naturalised across some seven hundred years until nobody living experienced the Qur'an, the fast, the qadi's judgment or the reverence owed a shaykh as an import. Saying so does not make it less Somali; it makes it a

built thing that became real, which is more durable than any lie and was defended, when the Italians came, as men defend the edge of reality rather than a policy. What matters structurally is that by 1890 this order sat at the cheap pole. It cost nobody anything to maintain. It required no garrison, no inspector, no subsidy and no surveillance, because the people held it up themselves. That is what Italy was going to have to displace, and the measure of what displacing it would have cost is the reason nobody tried.

What Italy built, and who it was for

Against that, the colonial provision.

By 1926 there were elementary schools at Mogadishu, Merca, Afgooye and the Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi, together with an evening school, a school of arts and crafts, and an infant school. Under De Vecchi from 1924 the Consolata Fathers expanded mission-run education, and the recent scholarship on those schools is precise about the motive: the engine of colonial school-building in 1920s Somalia was the need for locally available skilled labour, and the curriculum ran to catechism and the practical arts. Under Corni from 1928 the missionaries were told to stop evangelising and to adapt the curriculum instead, and Catholic teachers began writing favourable references to Islam into their lessons in order to keep Muslim pupils in the room. Under the same governor, racial segregation was extended to the schools, and Somali classes were separated from Italian ones.

And the ceiling was set. The Somali scholar Mohamed Aden Scek records that Somalis were barred from any course above the third elementary year, on the stated ground that what the first three years taught was sufficient for the manual work to which the native labour force was destined. There was in addition a school reserved for *meticci*, mixed-race children, and a *brefotrofio*, a foundling hospital, of which more below.

Three years. Set that beside Article 18 of law 999 and the machine is fully visible. The statute says a perfectly Italian education can make you Italian. The school system says a Somali may have three years of one. The two provisions were enacted by the same state within a decade of each other and there is no evidence that anyone in Rome or Mogadishu found them awkward, because they were not in tension: they were the same policy stated at two levels. The gate was named in the citizenship law and bolted in the education regulations.

Formation installs a portrait of the good subject — the virtues, duties and self-understanding it teaches. In Italian Somalia that portrait can be quoted almost from the syllabus. The good Somali subject could read a little, count a little, follow a written instruction, and work. Governor Rava, who ran the colony from 1931 to 1935, published in 1937 a book called *Il problema della mano d'opera in Somalia* — the labour problem in Somalia — and in 1938 another on social policy toward the natives and modes of collaboration with them. The order's own literature names the thing it wanted formed: a workforce and a set of collaborating intermediaries. Nothing above that was to be formed, because nothing above that was to be admitted.

There is one apparent counter-example and it dissolves on inspection. The Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi, the Duke of the Abruzzi's concession settlement on the Shebelle, was a fully equipped formative environment: a school, an infant school, a maternity house run by missionary sisters, a hospital, a cinema, a church — and a mosque. Nine thousand inhabitants. **Of whom one hundred were Italians.** The mosque is not evidence of a formative project directed at Somalis; it is evidence of a plantation that needed its labourers to have somewhere to pray. Everything in the settlement that formed anybody in the Italian order formed the hundred.

The one formation Italy did invest in, and the wall it ran into

There was, however, one Somali population Italy formed seriously, at expense, over decades, and with real success: the men who held the floor.

The floor of force established the composition. Companies of four hundred and forty-six Africans to five Italian officers in 1905; four Eritrean companies and two Somali-Arab in the column that took the lower Shebelle in 1908; the *zaptié* gendarmerie under Carabinieri command; the *dubats*, the irregular Somali levies raised in 1924 under Major Bechis, whose name means white turban and who carried the campaign of the sultanates. These men were trained, drilled, disciplined, uniformed, paid, decorated and in every meaningful sense formed — given a code, a hierarchy, a loyalty and an identity that is formation of the most effective kind, because it was reinforced daily by a peer group, backed by material reward, and displayed in costly and visible ways.

And it led nowhere. The rule, hardened after the proclamation of the empire, was that an African subject could not acquire Italian citizenship in any case — expressly including the

case of a man who had performed military service. The colonial soldier could be formed into an instrument and could not be admitted as a person. This is the Eritrean finding arriving at its logical terminus: a colony that exported soldiers and could not enfranchise one.

It is also the sharpest available illustration of the rule that formation is withheld because forming means admitting. Italy did not withhold formation because it was incapable of it, or because it thought Somalis unteachable, or because the money was short. It had a working formative apparatus, ran it for forty years on the men it needed, and was quite content with the results. What it withheld was the *kind* of formation that generates a claim — literacy above three years, the metropole's law and history, the ladder — and it withheld that from everyone including the men whose formation it had otherwise paid for.

The gate narrows, and then is walled up

Now follow Article 18 forward, because it does not survive the decade, and the way it dies is a finding.

The 1933 law had left a door: a person of partly white descent with a perfectly Italian education could, at eighteen, become a citizen. Before 1936 the child of an Italian father and a Somali mother had Italian citizenship if the father recognised him, and the practice extended to children whose appearance indicated a white parent.

Then the empire was proclaimed and the door was closed in four movements. The organic law of the empire, royal decree-law of 1 June 1936 no. 1019, on the ordering and administration of Italian East Africa, carried a chapter on subjecthood which reproduced the 1933 provisions closely enough to look unchanged and was read as extinguishing the extension to Somalia and Eritrea. Royal decree-law of 19 April 1937 no. 880, converted with modifications by law of 30 December 1937 no. 2590, prohibited relations of a conjugal nature between an Italian citizen and a subject of Italian East Africa. Law of 29 June 1939 no. 1004 — its title is *Sanzioni penali per la difesa del prestigio di razza di fronte ai nativi dell'Africa italiana*, penal sanctions for the defence of the prestige of race before the natives of Italian Africa — made the birth of a mixed-race child evidence of that offence, which discouraged Italian fathers from recognising their children rather effectively. And the law of 13 May 1940 no. 822, the *Norme relative ai meticci*, forbade

Italian men to recognise children born to African women or to contribute to their maintenance, and assigned mixed-race children the juridical status of colonial subjects, taking the status of the native parent. Some eight hundred who had acquired citizenship before 1936 kept it.

Look at what has happened to the criterion. In 1933 the qualification for admission was **an education**. By 1940 it was **a descent**, and the education was worth nothing. The 1933 clause had, whatever its authors intended, left a proposition standing that could be pointed at: *if I am formed as an Italian, I may become one.* Nobody in Somalia was ever going to be able to point at it, because the schools stopped at the third year — but the proposition was there, in the statute book, available. The racial legislation of 1936 to 1940 removed it, and in removing it converted an exclusion that was contingent and therefore arguable into one that was ontological and therefore not.

This is worth stating as a general expectation, because the corpus has seen the pattern without naming the mechanism. **An order that withholds formation while leaving a formation-based route to admission on its books is carrying an unstable arrangement, because the route is a standing invitation to the argument the order cannot afford. Expect such an order, under pressure, to legislate descent — not because racial doctrine has newly persuaded anyone, but because descent is the only criterion that cannot be met by conduct.** The Italian sequence is unusually clean because it is dated: education as the test in 1933, blood as the test in 1940, seven years, four statutes, one direction.

And the human residue of it is the *brefotrofio* and the school for *meticci*. A state that had made a perfectly Italian education the qualification for citizenship, and then abolished the qualification, was left holding a population of children it had itself produced, whom it had begun to form and then decided could not be admitted however formed, and for whom it built a separate school and a foundling hospital. That is what a formation policy looks like when it has been overtaken by a descent policy: an institution for people the order has finished having a use for.

Where the two formations met

The pattern's discipline is to look, where formation is withheld, for what the surviving order does with the field it is left. In Somalia it did not merely hold the field. **It supplied the command structure of the wars.**

Sheikh Abdi Abikar Gaafle, who led the Biimaal coalition against the Italians from the 1890s to 1908 and lived until 1922, was a *ma'allin* — a teacher-sheikh — from the Biimaal, and the Salihiyya maintained a centre in Biimaal territory. Ma'allin Mursal Abdi Yusuf, who led beside him, was likewise a religious teacher at Merca. Mohammed Abdullah Hassan, whose twenty-year war in the north shaped the whole region, came out of the Salihiyya. The men who organised armed resistance to the Italian floor were, with striking consistency, products and operators of the formative institutions Italy had declined to displace.

And the Italians understood this well enough to shoot at it. Sheikh Ahmed Haji Mahdi, a Qadiri scholar of Mogadishu who died in 1900, would not live in the city under Italian rule, and removed himself twenty kilometres south to the village of Nimow, where he founded a centre of Islamic teaching called Dar al-Hijra — the House of the Emigration, the name itself a citation of the Prophet's departure from Mecca and therefore a public statement about what the Italian presence was. When Cecchi's column was destroyed at Lafoole in November 1896, Nimow was among the places bombarded from the sea in reprisal, and Cassanelli identifies that bombardment as the first Italian colonial action directed against a Somali civilian population.

So the first shell Italy fired at Somali civilians was fired at a religious school. Not because it was a school — because it was a settlement of people who had chosen exile rather than the flag. But the coincidence is not accidental in the structural sense, and it is the whole argument compressed into one event: **the formation Italy would not replace was housed in institutions that were also the organisational infrastructure of refusal, and the only instrument Italy ever brought to bear on it was the floor of force.**

Reading Somali formation against the pattern

The contribution: where a colonial order has a naturalisation statute, read its conditions, because they state in the coloniser's own words what formation was understood to do — and the school system's ceiling is then legible as the

deliberate complement of the citizenship threshold rather than as neglect. The pattern's proposition that formation is withheld because forming means admitting is normally established by inference from absence, and absence is always contestable: a sceptic can attribute an empty school system to poverty, distance, indifference or the ordinary incompetence of colonial administration, and often he is partly right. Italian Somalia supplies the rarer thing, a case where the two halves are both in writing and can be set beside each other. Law 999 of 1933 makes *una educazione perfettamente italiana* a condition of Italian citizenship; the education regulations cap the Somali at the third elementary year on the stated ground that three years is what a manual labourer needs. Neither document mentions the other. Together they are a policy. **The operational instruction is to hunt the naturalisation or subjecthood statute first, before counting schools — because the statute tells you what the schools were for, and what they were for is usually the reason there were none.**

The refinement: formation-as-qualification is unstable, and orders under pressure replace it with descent. This follows from the first and is stated above; it wants repeating here as the thing to test elsewhere. A criterion a subject can in principle satisfy leaves the order exposed to the subject who satisfies it. A criterion of blood does not. The Italian legislative sequence from 1933 to 1940 runs that conversion in seven years with four dated instruments, and the corpus should look for the same movement in every order that begins with an assimilationist formula and ends with a racial one. The prediction is that the conversion will arrive not when racial doctrine becomes fashionable but **when the number of people who could plausibly claim under the old criterion begins to be non-trivial** — which, for Italy, is exactly when an empire was proclaimed and a settler population arrived.

The confirmation, stated as a confirmation: the previous conquest's formation held the field by walkover, and it did more than hold it. Eritrea's study found the coloniser withholding its own formation and the old order simply holding the ground. Somalia confirms it completely — the dugsi, the orders, the *jamaʿa*, the calendar and the qadi were never seriously contested, and the one attempt to contest them, De Vecchi's five-year Christianising push, produced a cathedral, some mission schools, an orphanage, a foundling hospital and no Somalis, and was abandoned by his successor. But Somalia adds a term the Eritrean finding did not need. **The surviving formation is not only a set of beliefs the coloniser failed to displace; it is a set of institutions, with**

buildings, revenues, teachers, land and a network — and those institutions are therefore also the available organisational infrastructure for armed refusal. The Biimaal war was commanded by teacher-sheikhs; the Dervish war came out of a *tariqa*; the first Italian bombardment of civilians fell on a religious school founded by a scholar in internal exile. Where a coloniser declines to build a formative apparatus, he does not merely leave belief in place; he leaves standing the only organisation in the country that can convene, fund and legitimate a coalition across clan lines — which, in a segmentary society with no permanent hierarchy, is a very great deal indeed. That last point belongs to elite coordination, and is handed over to it.

And the discipline the case tests. It is easy, having laid out a colonial statute that made an Italian education the price of admission and an education system that stopped at the third grade, to slide into treating the Somali formation as a heroic alternative and the Italian one as a fraud. Neither reading survives contact. The dugsi was a genuine, effective, deeply believed formative system that gave a pastoral people a literate religious civilisation, and it was also the naturalised residue of an earlier conquest that had arrived by sea and by the sword. The Italian schools were pitiful in extent and cynical in ceiling, and the men who taught in the mission classrooms and wrote respectful references to Islam into their syllabuses in order to keep their pupils were not cynics. **A built thing that became real is not a lie, and the people formed by it are not dupes** — and that holds for both formations, which is why the fault line the colonial period opened was so durable, and why the state that inherited the country in 1960 inherited a population formed by an apparatus the state did not own.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The phrase *una educazione perfettamente italiana* is quoted from Article 18 of law 6 July 1933, no. 999, *Ordinamento organico per l'Eritrea e la Somalia*, as reproduced in an Italian Chamber of Deputies committee report on colonial-era citizenship; the statute's full text has not been consulted and the surrounding conditions of the article are described from that report rather than quoted. Given how much of the argument rests on that clause, the original should be obtained from the *Gazzetta Ufficiale*. No other primary text is quoted verbatim here.

Reported rather than quoted. The identifications and dates of royal decree-law 1 June 1936 no. 1019 (*Ordinamento e amministrazione dell'Africa Orientale Italiana*), royal decree-

law 19 April 1937 no. 880 as converted by law 30 December 1937 no. 2590, law 29 June 1939 no. 1004 (*Sanzioni penali per la difesa del prestigio di razza di fronte ai nativi dell'Africa italiana*), and law 13 May 1940 (*Norme relative ai meticci*) are taken from Italian parliamentary documents and from the scholarship of Olindo De Napoli and Giulia Barrera; their texts have not been read and none is quoted. **Sources differ on the number of the 1940 law**, giving it variously as no. 822 and no. 882; the parliamentary material consulted gives 822 and that is used here, but the discrepancy is unresolved. The figure of about eight hundred *meticci* who retained citizenship acquired before 1936 is likewise reported and not verified. The terminology of colonial status is contested in the literature — at least one account holds that Somalis and Eritreans were formally distinguished from Ethiopians, who were colonial subjects proper — and no weight is placed on the distinction here; what the argument relies on is the rule, stated in the parliamentary material, that African subjects could not acquire citizenship in any case, including where they had performed military service.

The statement that Somalis were barred from any course above the third elementary year, and the reasoning attributed to that bar, is that of the Somali scholar Mohamed Aden Scek as reported in a recent Italian survey of colonists and colonised in Italian East Africa; the underlying source has not been traced and the claim, though consistent with everything else known about the system, should be treated as reported. The same survey supplies the 1926 list of schools, the extension of racial segregation to classrooms under Corni, and the existence of a school for *meticci* and a *brefotrofio*.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. For the mission schools, their labour rationale, De Vecchi's assimilationist teaching and Corni's switch to curriculum adaptation and discouragement of evangelisation, Caterina Scalvedi, "Cruce et Aratro: Fascism, Missionary Schools, and Labor in 1920s Italian Somalia" (2020) and her work on Catholic teachers and Muslim students. For the *dugsi*, the three orders, the *jama'a* and their founders, I. M. Lewis's writings on Somali Islam, B. G. Martin and Said Samatar on Shaykh Uways and the Uwaysiyya, Scott Reese on Benadir religious life, and Mohamed Mohamed-Abdi, "Back to Qur'anic Schools (Dugsi) in Somalia" (*Cahiers d'études africaines*, 2003). Lee V. Cassanelli is the source for the identification of the bombardment of Nimow as the first Italian action against a Somali civilian population, and for the Benadir religious geography generally. For the citizenship and race legislation,

De Napoli and Barrera as above. Lucia Ceci, *Il vessillo e la croce*, remains unread and is the most important gap in the robe and formation together.

Contested figures, and what is missing. **No enrolment figures for Somalia are given, because none have been obtained, and the absence should be visible rather than papered over.** Neither the number of Somali children in Italian colonial schools in any year nor any estimate of *dugsi* attendance was traced, and the argument therefore rests on the structure of the provision rather than on its scale. For comparison only, and expressly not as Somali evidence: an Italian colonial review reported in 1931 that Tripolitania then had thirty Italo-Arab schools with 3,523 pupils, against 8,548 pupils in Qur'anic schools kept by native teachers in the *zawiyas* and villages. If the Somali ratio resembled the Libyan one it would understate the disproportion badly, since Libya was the colony where Italy invested most in native schooling and Somalia among the least. The grim accounting will need real figures for both systems, and they should be sought in the governors' *relazioni* — Corni's for 1929–30 is in print — before it is attempted. The population and composition figures for the Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi (about nine thousand inhabitants, of whom a hundred Italians) are an Italian source's for the late 1920s and were flagged with the settlement as uncorroborated; they are used for their ratio rather than their precision.

MODULE 5

THE FORCE TO MAKE THEM OBSERVED

The cost column — why an ordinary Somali complied, run separately for the herdsman who could not be found, the valley farmer who could not leave his fields, the freed man whose ledger improved and then closed again, and the askari who was paid; and how a state that in 1900 could not enforce a hunting licence came, thirty years later, to need guards standing over men in a banana field.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The column begins empty, because almost nothing is being demanded

The floor of force quoted Governor Dulio's circular of 26 May 1900 for what it revealed about reach. It belongs here too, for what it reveals about the ledger, and this time the sentence to hold is the last clause. Explaining to his residents why he would issue no general rule to the natives about hunting, Dulio wrote that Italian influence in the interior was very limited; that to occupy effectively all the territory depending on Italy would require at least tripling the present number of askari, which the government's programme and his means made impossible; and therefore that there was no question of issuing general provisions, all the more since

> *ci mancherebbe assolutamente la forza di farle osservare*
>
> *we would absolutely lack the force to make them observed*

It is tempting to read that as a confession of weakness. Read as a ledger entry it says something else and more useful. **A cost column has to be built only against the defections you actually mind.** In 1900 Italy wanted a customs house on four beaches and the standing that came from a colour on a map. Customs are enforced at the water's edge, on merchants who have to come to the water anyway; they require no reach into the

interior at all. So the ordinary Somali of 1900 — herdsman, valley cultivator, caravan man, dependant — was asked for nothing, and was accordingly punished for nothing, and complied in the trivial sense that there was nothing to comply with. The empty cost column was not primarily a failure. It was the correct and cheap answer to a very small demand.

It is a general rule that the cost column is the credible enforcer that prices defection too high to choose, and that where belief is thin it must be held high by visible force. Both halves are right. What this case adds at the outset is the term that makes the ledger dynamic rather than static: **the height at which the cost column must be held is set by what is being demanded, and when a conqueror's wants change, the column has to be built from nothing, at speed, against a population that has had no reason to acquire any habit of obedience.** Everything expensive and brutal in Italian Somalia after about 1904 follows from a want that changed after the instruments had been written for a want that no longer applied.

So the ledger runs four times, for four different men, and then again across time.

The merchant: the one ledger that closed on its own

Take first the stratum for which Italian rule made arithmetical sense, because it existed and the study should say so.

The Benadir merchant — Somali, Arab, Indian — lived by a coastal trade in grain, sesame, hides and livestock moving to Arabia and the Gulf, and by the caravan circuits inland which the Landscape described. Under the Zanzibari arrangement he paid duties at a customs post whose authority stopped at the town wall and dealt inland through the *abbaan*, buying protection again at every lineage boundary. Under the Italians he paid a schedule — five per cent ad valorem on imports, twelve on sesame and groundnut, fifteen on ivory, copal and rubber, per-head duties on stock — into a régie run first by a Milanese company and then by the state; and in exchange, eventually, he got a port that worked, a currency (the *besa* and *rupia* from 1909–10, replaced by the lira from 1 July 1925), a bank, courts whose judgments could be executed, and a road and rail system that made the interior reachable without renegotiating protection every hundred miles.

That is a real benefit column and it should be entered at full weight. It is also the reason the coastal towns were the one place Italian authority was continuously effective for fifty

years without a campaign. The merchants of the Benadir were nonetheless hostile to the Italians through the 1900s — the Italian record itself names the Arab-Indian trading houses, the local mercantile petty bourgeoisie and the Islamic clergy among the interests that resisted the Benadir Company's penetration — because a customs regime that takes the caravan trade's margin and simultaneously closes the traffic in persons is not an unmixed gift. But the ledger closed. He complied because compliance was where his living was, and no one had to hold a rifle on him.

Note what makes this stratum different: **he could not exit, because his business was the port, and the port was the state.** That is the only place in Somalia where the exit door was structurally shut without anyone having to shut it.

The herdsman: a man the ledger could not reach

Now the majority, and the hard case.

For the pastoralist of the interior and the north the ledger did not bind for thirty-six years, and it did not bind because neither column had anything in it. The benefit column was empty because nothing Italy built was on his route: no school he could use, no market he needed, no security he did not already provide himself through his *diya*-paying group, no court he preferred to the elders and the qadi. The cost column was empty because he could not be found. Boqor Osman Mahamuud had told the Italians so in 1889, and the commander who reported the conversation wrote it down: his people were strong and had no need of assistance, because if attacked on the coasts he would withdraw into the interior. That is not defiance; it is a correct statement of the exit position, and it held for two generations.

The pattern's exit dial is usually a question about law, geography or economics — can the peasant leave, and is there anywhere better. For a Somali pastoralist the answer was that leaving was not an event but a habit. He moved anyway, seasonally, by design, and the frontiers he could move across were adjacent and permeable: British Somaliland to the north-west, Ethiopia to the west, the Juba and beyond it British territory to the south. The Italian answer to Bender Bela and El Bur in 1925 was itself the proof — when the resistance in the Hobyo sultanate broke, its leaders crossed into Ethiopia and went on raiding from there for years.

So when Italy finally wanted something from this man — and what it wanted, in 1925, was that he should stop being able to shoot at Italians — it faced the problem in its pure form: **high exit, no belief, therefore the cost column must be supplied entirely by force, and force does not work on a man you cannot locate.** The answer De Vecchi found is the one that answer always is, and it is worth naming as a general instrument rather than as a Somali incident. He did not try to police the pastoralist. He took the pastoralist's rifle. The campaign of the sultanates was, in its own administrative description, a disarmament, and its measurable output was sixteen thousand five hundred firearms recovered, at a cost the Italian sources put at five hundred and fifty dead on their side and one thousand two hundred and thirty-six Somali — figures already flagged as the conqueror's own and almost certainly a floor on the second.

Against a mobile population you cannot raise the cost of defection by threatening the man. You can only raise it by removing the instrument. Disarmament is what a cost column looks like when it is built for people who cannot be reached — and it is the one form of coercion whose effect persists after the column has gone home, which is precisely why it was worth two years of naval bombardment and blockade to a government that had spent the previous thirty-six years declining to spend anything at all.

The valley farmer: the ledger that flipped, and why

The riverine Somali of the lower Shebelle — Biimaal, Wacdaan, elements of the Geledi and Hintire — is the stratum where the change in Italian wants can be watched doing its work, because his ledger flipped twice within fifteen years and both flips were caused from outside.

Before 1900 his position was much like the merchant's without the port: he was asked for nothing, and there was little the Italians could take from him. He farmed land allocated by his clan's elders, worked alongside dependent cultivators whose position derived from *sheegad* and from purchase, and sold grain and sesame down to Merca and Brava for a coastal trade that predated the Italians and would have continued without them.

Then two Italian instruments arrived, three years apart, and between them they emptied his benefit column and filled his cost column at the same time. The first was the 1895 declaration that all uncultivated land without an ascertained owner belonged to the Kingdom of Italy, together with the one-year registration deadline that extinguished

unrecorded claims — dormant for a decade, but law. The second was the move against the traffic in persons: the Benadir Company's pressure, then Sapelli's decree, then Dulio's ordinance of 2 March 1903, which did not free the existing slaves but ended the trade, freed thirteen years' worth of children, permitted self-redemption, and secured to the slave his own earnings.

Set that beside what his farming actually rested on and the response is not mysterious. **He was being asked to accept, simultaneously, that the land was not his and that the labour was not his** — and he was being asked by a power that had, in 1903, perhaps two thousand armed men in the whole colony and no presence at all more than a few miles inland. His exit was worse than the herdsman's, because a field cannot be driven to Ethiopia. So the ledger came out for fighting, and he fought: the siege of Merca from April 1904 to January 1905, the killing of the resident Trevis, the coalition under the teacher-sheikhs Gaafle and Ma'allin Mursal, Dhanane in 1907, and the end at Di Giorgio's hands in 1908 when a square with four mountain guns finally made the cost column real in the lower Shebelle.

This is the pattern's proposition about extraction as a stock rather than a rate, arriving early and in an unexpected form. The manual holds that where the object is the land itself there is no "just enough" equilibrium, because a stock cannot be taken at a tunable rate, and the taking produces the revolt by its completion. Somalia complicates that usefully. **What was taken here in the first instance was not the land and not a rate but a** *legal capacity* — the capacity to own, and the capacity to command dependent labour. Neither is a flow that can be eased back, and neither is a stock that can be physically seized; both are switches. And a switch, like a stock, has no setting below the revolt threshold. That is why an administration wanting only customs receipts in 1903 found itself in a four-year war: it had thrown two switches it could not partially throw.

The freed man: the ledger that improved, and then was closed again

Now the stratum it is most important to get right, because it is the only place in Italian Somalia where the conquest made an ordinary person's ledger genuinely better before it made it worse.

For the servile cultivator of the Shebelle and the Juba — the Bantu-descended and locally enslaved population whose position the Landscape set out — the arrival of an Italian abolitionist administration was not a rhetorical event. The ordinance of 1903 freed every child born in the preceding thirteen years. It permitted redemption at a price fixed by a European official rather than by the master. It declared that whatever a slave earned by trade or by his own labour was his absolute property. And behind it stood a state, however thin, whose declared warrant was that this traffic should end, and to which a man could in principle appeal against the person who owned him. The Gosha communities on the lower Juba had been forming themselves out of escapees since the 1840s; after 1903 the escape had a legal destination.

Enter that in the ledger at full weight and without hedging. **For this stratum, and for a period, the benefit column of the Italian order was real, and the people concerned acted as though they knew it.** It is also, not incidentally, why the men who owned them went to war.

And then it closed. The Italian concessions on the Juba and then the Shebelle needed hands, and the hands did not come. Lewis's account is blunt about the sequence: recruitment proved far harder than expected; the Italian Resident in the Gosha District therefore compelled people — chiefly former slaves and serfs — onto the plantations being opened; wages were not especially low, and voluntary recruits were still scarce; and those who were induced to work had to be watched by guards, or they stopped working or ran. Cassanelli's work supplies the state's own vocabulary for what they were doing when they ran: *vagabondaggio*, vagrancy — a problem the administration named as a cause of the labour shortage, and which De Vecchi answered with an insistence on settled and civil life and with mission schools whose brief, as the recent scholarship puts it, included teaching the young not to leave the settler community. In the Juba region there was a further mechanism the labour history has only lately named, in which women and girls were married under compulsion on condition of working the settlers' farms for a term of years — an arrangement remembered locally as the Italian marriage.

Read that as a ledger and the arithmetic is exact and horrible.

The benefit column was not empty: there were wages, and the wages were not derisory, and there were contracts, and the concessions' own records advertise production bonuses and the remission of debts. But **a wage that has to be enforced by a guard is not a wage the recipient has valued above his alternative.** The pattern's cleanest diagnostic

applies without amendment: surveillance is the tell of a belief that never took, and here it is not a metaphor about ideology but a man with a rifle standing at the edge of a cotton field to prevent a paid employee from walking home. The presence of the guard is the whole finding. It says that the employer knew the ledger did not close, and that he intended to keep the man anyway.

And the mechanism by which he kept him is the thing the extraction has to reckon with. This was not slavery. Nobody owned these people; the state that employed them had abolished ownership and reported the abolition annually to Brussels; there were contracts, wages, bonuses, and even debt remission. What there was instead was an administration that could tell a district's freedmen to present themselves, a definition of leaving as vagrancy, a settlement policy that made staying the only lawful condition, and, at the far end, a marriage that was a labour contract. **The coercion had been moved out of the law of persons and into the law of place.** That is why it could not be called slavery, and why it did not have to be.

The starting expectation had been that Italy would abolish a slavery and reconstitute it. The opening landscape corrected that: there had been no plantation to reconstitute. The correction now completes itself, and it is worse than the original charge. **Italy did not rebuild the servitude it abolished. It abolished a servitude, improved the position of the people held in it, and then built a new and different servitude over the same people — one whose coercion was administrative rather than proprietary, and which was therefore invisible to every instrument the abolitionists had built to watch for the old one.**

The askari: a full column with a ceiling

One stratum had a benefit column that closed properly, and it was the one that carried the rifle.

The askari, the *zaptié*, the *dubat* had pay, rations, a uniform, a weapon, a rank, a pension prospect, the standing that a paid armed man has in a society where standing had previously come from lineage, and — as the formation module argued — a formation as complete and as effective as any Italy ran in Africa. For a young man from a poor lineage in a bad year, that ledger closed decisively, and the near-total absence of mutiny across fifty years is the evidence. It is also the reason the colonial floor was affordable at all: Italy did

not have to hold these men down, because it had bought them, and the price was low because the alternatives were poor.

And then the ceiling, established from the statutes: no African subject could acquire Italian citizenship in any case, expressly including the case of a man who had performed military service. The one Somali who had a full benefit column was permitted to fill it exactly as high as a sergeant's pay and no higher. The default question — *if this arrangement collapsed tomorrow, would this man be better or worse off?* — returns, for the askari, the answer the order needed, and returns it for thirty years. What it does not return is any reason for him to defend the arrangement beyond his own slot, which is a problem for elite coordination and is handed on to it.

Four doors, and what Italy did to each

Gather the exits, because the pattern's second dial is the one that explains most of the variation above.

The first door is mobility, and it was wide. Italy's answer was not to close it — it could not — but to remove what made walking out militarily meaningful, by taking sixteen thousand five hundred rifles in 1925–27 and by settling frontier accords with the British at Berbera and with Ethiopia. A man could still leave. He could no longer leave and come back armed.

The second door is desertion from the wage, and it was wide enough that guards were posted at it. Italy's answer was to rename it: to walk away from a plantation was *vagabondaggio*, a public-order offence and a named cause of the colony's labour shortage, which converted an economic choice into an infraction. The pattern's warning about words that cross a border and leave behind the thing that justified them applies precisely: *vagrancy* in Europe presupposed an alternative livelihood the vagrant was refusing; in the Shebelle it described a man going back to his own field.

The third door is the one the series has not had cause to name before, and the old formation supplied it. A Somali who found the Italian order intolerable could withdraw into an institution the Italians did not control and had no intention of building — the *jama'a*, the religious agricultural settlement, of which the Qadiriyya had been founding examples on the rivers since 1819. When Sheikh Ahmed Haji Mahdi refused to live in Mogadishu under Italian rule he went twenty kilometres south to Nimow and

founded a teaching settlement he named Dar al-Hijra, the House of the Emigration — a name that made the departure a religious act with a scriptural precedent, and which therefore converted flight into fidelity. That is exit that requires no frontier, costs no property, forfeits no standing, and gains honour. **Where a coloniser leaves the prior formation in place, he leaves in place not only its beliefs and its officers but its emigration doctrine — and a population with a legitimated internal exit is far harder to price than one that must either submit or emigrate.** Italy's answer to that door, in 1897, was to shell it from the sea.

The fourth door is submission, and for most people most of the time it was the one taken, for the ordinary reason that the alternatives were worse and the demand, until it wasn't, was small.

The tax that was not levied

One negative finding, stated as provisional because it rests on the absence of evidence in the sources examined rather than on positive proof, and stated anyway because it bears directly on the extraction and on the medium-of-payment test.

The manual's expectation for a European colonial order taxing a subsistence population is specific: a levy payable only in the conqueror's currency, on households that hold none, which converts the household's arithmetic into a labour draft without any law compelling labour, and which passes unnoticed in the metropole because taxation is a familiar and lawful category. Kenya, Senegal, southern Africa and Sierra Leone all run it.

In Italian Somalia the record does not show it. The colony had a currency of its own from 1909 and the metropolitan lira from 1925; it had a customs régie from 1892; it had, from 1908, a fiscal administration. What the labour history describes is not fiscal pressure at all but direct administrative compulsion: a Resident ordering the freedmen of a district onto a plantation, guards to keep them there, vagrancy as the offence of leaving, and a settlement policy to make the arrangement permanent.

If that holds — and it should be tested against De Vecchi's own budget report, the *Relazione sul progetto di bilancio della Somalia Italiana per l'esercizio finanziario 1926–1927*, and against Corni's *relazione* for 1929–30, both of which are in print and neither of which has been read — then the reason is instructive and the general account should carry it. **The medium-of-payment mechanism has a precondition, and the precondition**

is legibility. A hut tax requires huts that stand still, a headman who can be made responsible for the return, and a census. Against a pastoral population that moves by design, is not counted, and can cross three frontiers, the instrument simply does not attach; and against the riverine freedmen — the one population Italy actually wanted to work — it was unnecessary, because they were already immobile, already stripped of any master who might object, and reachable by an order from a district officer.

The consequence is the sharp part. Where the fiscal trick is available, the compulsion is relocated into the household's arithmetic and becomes invisible to the metropole. **Where it is unavailable, the conqueror must compel directly — and direct compulsion is visible, dearer, and very much harder to defend before an audience that has been told the colony's warrant is the suppression of slavery.** So the colonies that could run a hut tax read, in the archive, as gentler than the colonies that could not, without necessarily having been so. Italian Somalia is the second kind, and the fact that its coercion is legible to us at all is a fact about the instrument it was forced to use rather than about the depth of its cruelty relative to its neighbours.

Reading the Somali cost column against the pattern

The contribution: the height of the cost column is set by the demand, so a change in what the conqueror wants is a change in what the order costs — and the two can be dated separately. The manual reads the cost column as a property of an order: full or empty, thick or thin, force at the margins or force everywhere. Italian Somalia shows it as a property of a *relation*, which moves when either side moves, and where in this case only one side moved. Nothing about the Somali population's beliefs, capacities or dispositions altered materially between 1900 and 1930. What altered was that Italy stopped wanting a customs house and started wanting land and hands. **The operational instruction: before reading an empty cost column as weakness or a full one as tyranny, establish what was being demanded in that year, because a column is only as high as it has to be, and an order that demands almost nothing will look mild for exactly as long as its wants are small.** Dulio in 1900 could not enforce a hunting licence and did not need to; De Vecchi in 1926 needed sixteen thousand five hundred rifles and a barrage on the Shebelle, and got them. The same state, the same people, a different want.

The second contribution: exit has a form not previously priced — the legitimated internal exit supplied by the prior formation. Geography and law are the usual doors, and both were open here. But the *jama'a* and the *hijra* gave a Somali the option of leaving the colonial order without leaving the country, at no cost to his property or standing and at a gain to his honour, into an institution the coloniser had declined to displace. This is the direct and unanticipated consequence of the withheld-formation finding: **withheld formation does not merely leave beliefs standing; it leaves standing an alternative order that a subject can move into, which is an exit, and which therefore raises the price of every demand the coloniser makes.** Where a coloniser did not build a formative apparatus, look for the exits the surviving one provides, and expect them to be underpriced in the colonial record because they are invisible to a customs house.

The confirmation, sharpened: surveillance is the tell, and the tell can be literal. The manual's diagnostic is normally applied to political policing. Here it applies to agricultural management, and the evidence is a paid worker under guard. Whatever the wage was — and it was not derisory, and there were contracts and bonuses and debt remissions, and the concessionaires' own literature insists at length that this was not slavery — the guard is the employer's own testimony that the ledger did not close. **Where an order pays a wage and posts a guard over the man receiving it, the guard is the more reliable of the two documents.**

And the honest complication. For one stratum, and for one period, the Italian order genuinely improved the ledger of the worst-off people in the country. The 1903 ordinance was real; the children born in the preceding thirteen years were freed; the earnings were secured; the Gosha settlements grew. **Then the same administration closed the ledger again, over the same people, by a mechanism its own abolitionist warrant had not been built to see.** Both halves belong in the accounting and neither cancels the other. The extraction has to lay out the second half in numbers, and the grim accounting has to carry both.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The clause *ci mancherebbe assolutamente la forza di farle osservare* is from the governorial circular of 26 May 1900 on hunting, signed Dulio, as printed in Carlo Rossetti, *Manuale di legislazione della Somalia italiana, volume secondo: Documenti 1892–1908* (Rome, 1912), a public-domain official publication. The

customs schedule and the land and registration articles of the Filonardi Company's provisional regulation of 14 March 1895, and the ordinance of 2 March 1903, are from the same volume and were quoted with the settlement and the robe. The reported words of Boqor Osman Mahamuud, from the letter of 26 March 1889 by the commander of the *Rapido*, are as quoted with the floor of force. No new primary text is quoted here.

Reported rather than quoted. The currency sequence — bronze *bese* under royal decree of 28 January 1909 no. 95, silver *rupia* under that of 8 December 1910, and the substitution of the lira from 1 July 1925 under royal decree of 18 June 1925 no. 1143 at eight lire to the rupia — is from numismatic reference sources and has not been checked against the decrees. The disarmament yield of 16,500 firearms and the casualty figures for the campaign of the sultanates are Italian colonial figures, flagged earlier and carried here with the same warning. The Genale concession pattern — roughly a hundred Italian farms of between 75 and 600 hectares, averaging about 200, over some 20,000 hectares, cotton until about 1931 and bananas after — and the report in regime publications that four thousand families moved to Janaale between 1930 and 1935, are reported from the recent literature and from reference sources and are not verified. De Vecchi's *Relazione sul progetto di bilancio della Somalia Italiana per l'esercizio finanziario 1926–1927* (Mogadishu, 1925) and Guido Corni's *Relazione sulla Somalia italiana per l'esercizio 1929–30* (Mogadishu, 1931) are named from citations in Annalisa Urbano's article; neither has been read, and the negative finding about taxation cannot be regarded as settled until they have been.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. The account of compulsory recruitment in the Gosha District, of the difficulty of attracting voluntary labour despite wages that were not low, and of the guards required to keep recruits at work, is I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, paraphrased and not quoted. Lee V. Cassanelli, "The End of Slavery and the 'Problem' of Farm Labor in Colonial Somalia" (1988), is the foundational treatment of the subject and supplies the vagrancy analysis; it has been used at second hand through citations in Urbano and Scalvedi and has not been read directly, which is the largest single gap here and must be closed before the extraction. Annalisa Urbano, "A 'Grandiose Future for Italian Somalia': Colonial Developmentalist Discourse, Agricultural Planning, and Forced Labor (1900–1940)", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 92 (2017), 69–88, is the authority for the institutionalisation of forced labour through development planning; only its abstract and notes have been seen.

Caterina Scalvedi supplies De Vecchi's insistence on settled life and the missionary brief to teach the young not to leave the settler community. Francesca Declich, "Italian Weddings and Memory of Trauma: Colonial Domestic Policy in Southern Somalia, 1910–1941", is the source for the compulsory-marriage recruitment described here as the Italian marriage; the account is given as the labour and gender historiography gives it and the underlying evidence has not been examined.

Contested figures, and what cannot yet be done. **No wage rates, labour-force totals, hours, or numbers coerced are given, because none have been obtained**, and the ledger reconstructed here is therefore qualitative where it ought to be quantitative. That is a real limitation and it is the chief weakness of this stretch of the account. The counter-literature should also be recorded: Italian colonial-commemorative writing insists, with contemporary documentation, that Somali plantation workers held contracts, received production bonuses and had debts remitted, and that slavery did not exist in the colony. The first three claims appear to be true and the last is true as a statement about the law of persons. What the same sources do not explain is why guards were necessary, and that question is the one the extraction will have to answer with figures rather than with argument.

MODULE 6

FORTY-FIVE QUINTALS

Extraction — the customs on somebody else's trade, the monopolies on coin and salt and fruit, the river taken at the barrage, the labour compelled by an instrument that could not be called slavery, and the discovery that after fifty years the surplus was not coming out of Somalia at all.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Two numbers

In 1927 Italian Somalia exported to Italy forty-five quintals of bananas. Four and a half tonnes: one lorry-load, from a colony of some six hundred thousand square kilometres held for thirty-eight years.

In 1926 the Italian state's contribution to the budget of that colony was a hundred and ten million lire.

Hold those two figures beside each other and the module's problem states itself. This is supposed to be the extraction case — the one Italian possession with a river, a climate and a cash crop, the one that sits beside Saint-Domingue and Jamaica rather than beside Eritrea. It did eventually grow the crop: banana exports ran 45 quintals in 1927, 450 in 1928, 2,115 in 1929, 7,176 in 1930, 16,884 in 1931, 51,427 in 1932, 117,970 in 1933, 128,922 in 1934, 142,561 in 1935, 181,957 in 1936 and 226,525 in 1937, on a planted area that went from 45 hectares in 1926 to 4,500 in 1937. That is a genuine curve and it was produced by real land, real water and real coerced hands.

But it never paid for the colony, and by the time it was steep the money holding the colony up had been halved anyway — state contributions cut from a hundred and ten million lire in 1926 to fifty-five million and twenty-five thousand in the budget for 1928–29, when the crash arrived. **The extraction ran for fifty years and the ledger never closed.** So the module has to do two things: set out what was actually taken from Somalis, mechanism by mechanism, with the arithmetic where the arithmetic exists; and then

answer the harder question of where the money came from, given that it plainly was not coming out of the ground.

The first extraction: a rate on a flow somebody else had built

For the first thirty years the extraction was a customs schedule, and its most important property is that Italy did not create the trade it taxed.

The Landscape established the pre-colonial flow: grain and sesame from the Shebelle hinterland feeding Hadramawt and Oman, hides, livestock, ivory and gum moving down the caravan roads to Merca and Brava under the *abbaan* system, with the Zanzibari governors taking a duty at the town wall. The 1892 concession transferred the right to levy that duty; the Filonardi Company's regulation of 14 March 1895 set the rates. Five per cent ad valorem on imports, twenty-five on spirits above twenty per cent by volume; on exports, fifteen per cent on ivory, copal and rubber, twelve on sesame and groundnut, five on everything unscheduled; and a per-head charge on stock leaving the country — camels, horses, donkeys, cattle, sheep and goats, each at its own rate, with grain assessed by the *ghisla* of three hundred and sixty pounds of sorghum.

That is extraction as a rate on a flow, the classic tributary form, and it sat comfortably inside the "just enough" equilibrium because the extractor needed the producer to go on producing and had no capacity to compel him to do anything else. It was also, as the settlement showed, the *whole* of the commercial arrangement: the Company kept the surplus of receipts above the hundred and sixty thousand rupees owed to Zanzibar, and drew a state subsidy of three hundred thousand lire a year on top, rising to four hundred thousand gold francs under the 1898 convention. The Somali producer paid a duty at the water's edge and otherwise was left alone, for the reason the cost column gave: nobody wanted anything else from him yet.

The monopolies, in the order they were taken

Alongside the tariff ran a set of exclusive rights, and they are worth listing as a series because the list is longer than the crop and because several of them were taken before anyone knew what they were for.

Coin. Article VI of the 1892 concession gave Italy or its representatives the right to establish banks with *le privilège exclusif d'émettre des billets et de la monnaie d'or, d'argent*

et de cuivre — the exclusive privilege of issuing notes and gold, silver and copper coin. The Filonardi Company printed five-rupee notes in 1893; bronze *bese* followed by royal decree of 28 January 1909 and silver *rupie* by that of 8 December 1910, displacing the Maria Theresa thaler and the Indian rupee; and by royal decree of 18 June 1925 no. 1143 the Somali rupia was put out of course and the Italian lira substituted at eight to one from 1 July. A monopoly on the medium of exchange is the quietest of all extractions and the most general, since every transaction in the territory pays a small toll to whoever defines what money is.

Minerals. Article 2 of the 1895 regulation reserved to the Royal Italian Government the exclusive privilege of working, leasing or ceding mines and deposits of every kind of metal, mineral oil and precious stone. Three years later the state handed that reservation to the Benadir Company for free enjoyment, with power to transfer concessions to third parties.

Timber. Article 3 put the cutting of forest timber under permits which the Company's administrator could refuse or grant against a fee set by the size of the permit.

Arms. Article 8 prohibited the import, manufacture and sale of firearms, ammunition, powder and percussion caps, with special permits at the administrator's discretion. Read beside the disarmament of 1925–27 this is one policy across thirty years: the monopoly of violence maintained as a customs matter until it could be maintained as a military one.

The post, taken by convention with the Ministry of Posts in February 1901, with stamps bearing *Regie Poste Italiane* and *Bénadir*, the Company retaining all receipts.

Salt, from 1922. And **bananas**, from 1935. Both need their own sections.

The land granted, and the land used

The settlement followed the conversion of the country into public domain and its distribution as concessions. The question now is what came off it, and the answer contains a gap that should be stated plainly because it is the most easily missed thing in the case.

The concessions were large. The Duke of the Abruzzi's SAIS held twenty-five thousand hectares in the Scidle district on the Shebelle, on which by 1926 there were seven hundred and sixty kilometres of canals; the Genale district was some twenty thousand hectares distributed among roughly a hundred Italian farms of between seventy-five and six

hundred hectares, averaging about two hundred; there were about a dozen concessionaires on the Juba grouped in their own consortium. Call it forty-five to fifty thousand hectares granted, before counting the Juba.

The area actually under the colony's flagship export crop, at its documented peak in 1937, was **four thousand five hundred hectares.**

Even allowing for cotton, sugar cane and maize on the same ground — SAIS at its best year, 1931, produced 401,783 quintals of cane, 37,830 of maize, 10,703 of cotton and 5,928 of bananas — the granted area and the worked area are an order of magnitude apart. **A concession in Italian Somalia was in the main a claim on land rather than a use of it**, and that matters for two later modules: it means the dispossession was not principally a transfer of production but a transfer of title, and it means the Somali cultivator displaced from the demanio was very often displaced so that nothing in particular could happen on his field.

The river

One extraction has no tonnage figure and belongs in the ledger anyway.

The Shebelle is intermittent: two flood seasons, February–March and July–September, and long low water between. Riverine cultivation had always worked with that rhythm. Between 1923 and 1928 the Italians rebuilt it. SAIS threw a diversion dam across the river in 1923 and dug the canals and embankments for six estates on an initial five thousand hectares; De Vecchi's administration began a barrage at Genale to De Angelis's design in October 1924 and completed it on 27 October 1926, with a canal system intended to command some twenty thousand hectares between Genale, Merca and the new settlement of Vittorio d'Africa; an Agrarian and Colonisation Office was created to distribute and administer irrigation water, and a hydrometric and meteorological service established.

That is a genuine engineering achievement and the grim accounting will have to credit it. It is also an extraction with no entry in any export table. **Water taken above is water not arriving below**, and the people below were the Somali and Gosha cultivators of the lower valleys whose subsistence and market grain the opening landscape documented at over five thousand seven hundred tonnes of millet from Mogadishu alone by 1896. The scholarship on Fascist agricultural planning in Somalia records the general effect — that

development planning disrupted local foodstuff production and left the colony dependent on imported food — and that is the shape the river extraction takes in the record: not a tonnage removed but a subsistence system reorganised around somebody else's crop.

Salt: the one extraction that worked, and it did not go to Italy

The most successful single extractive enterprise in Italian Somalia was not agricultural, was not in the south, and had nothing to do with autarky.

A firm constituted at Milan in 1922, the Società Saline e Industrie della Somalia Settentrionale, built salt works on both sides of the Hafun peninsula in the Majeerteen — the Italians called the place Dante — beginning construction in 1922 and finishing about 1929, with production from 1931. It rebuilt Hafun as a company town for five thousand people. It ran two generating stations of five hundred and seven hundred and fifty horsepower, twenty-four kilometres of aerial ropeway rated at three hundred tonnes an hour, a twelve-kilometre aqueduct, jetties, a milling plant, a telegraph and post office, a church with a Catholic mission attached, and a lighthouse of twelve miles' range. At capacity it shipped over three hundred thousand tonnes of salt a year. Contemporary Italian accounts called it the largest salt works in the world and noted that Massawa, Djibouti and Aden together produced about half its annual output. Its market was principally **India**. The British destroyed it in 1941.

Two things follow. First, the timing: the concession was constituted in 1922, the works were built between 1922 and 1929, and the sovereignty over the ground was established by naval bombardment and blockade between 1925 and 1927. The conquest of the Majeerteen and the construction of the salt works are the same operation viewed from two ministries. Second, and against the expectation carried in: **the colony's most productive extraction was a straightforward mineral export to a world market outside the Italian empire.** Somalia is not, in this respect, an autarkic plantation colony at all. It is an autarkic plantation colony *and* a salt exporter, and the salt was the part that worked.

The labour, and the instrument that could not be called slavery

Now the centre, which the cost column set up and the extraction has to document.

The concessions could not get hands. Lewis's account of the earliest phase is blunt: recruitment proved far harder than expected; the Italian Resident in the Gosha District therefore compelled people, chiefly former slaves and serfs, onto the plantations being opened; wages were not particularly low and voluntary recruits were still scarce; and men induced to work had to be supervised by guards, or they stopped work or fled. Cassanelli's work supplies the administration's own diagnosis — that the flight of freed people from plantations and construction sites was *vagabondaggio*, vagrancy, and that vagrancy was a principal cause of the labour shortage — and De Vecchi's answer, an insistence on settled and civil life and a mission-school brief that included teaching the young not to leave the settler community. In the Juba region there operated in addition the recruitment mechanism the gender and labour historiography has named the Italian marriage, in which women and girls were married under compulsion on condition of working the settlers' farms for a fixed term of years.

Then it was formalised. The instrument was the *contratto di colonia* — a colonate or share contract binding a Somali family to a plot within a concession — first developed at the Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi and, by governorial decree no. 7475 of 1929, extended to all the agricultural districts of Italian Somalia. Between 1930 and 1935 the regime's own publications reported four thousand families moving into the Genale district. The concessionaires' literature records production bonuses and the remission of debts, which tells you both that the contract had a wage component and that it generated debt.

And here is the seam.

In June 1934 Italy ratified the International Labour Organisation's Convention no. 29 of 1930 on the abolition of forced labour, for the metropolitan territory and for all its colonies. In 1935, at the international labour conference at Paris, the Somali colonate contract was described — in the account transmitted by the Italian colonial literature, which is the only place it survives here — as an appreciable instrument of civil, social and economic progress to the benefit of the workers concerned.

Set that against the guards.

Both statements are true and they do not contradict each other, which is the whole point. The contract was a contract. It carried a wage, a plot, bonuses and debt relief. Nobody owned the men working under it; the state that had drafted it had abolished ownership in 1903 and reported the abolition annually to the special office at Brussels; and by 1934 it had signed the instrument that made forced labour an international offence. What the contract also did was fix a family to a concession, in a district where leaving was vagrancy, under an administration that could direct a district's freedmen to present themselves, in an economy where the alternative subsistence had been reorganised by a barrage.

The coercion had been moved out of the law of persons and into the law of place, and the compliance regimes of 1890 and 1930 were both built to inspect the law of persons. That is why Italy could ratify Convention 29 in June 1934 without altering anything material in the Shebelle, and why an international conference could commend the arrangement in 1935 while a man with a rifle stood at the edge of the field to stop a paid worker walking home.

This completes the finding the robe opened. The robe was cut for an audience that audited, and the audit was satisfied — not because the conduct changed, but because **a compliance regime defines what evasion looks like.** Any regime that specifies an offence specifies, in the same breath, the conduct that is not that offence; and an administration facing a schedule will migrate its practice into the space the schedule leaves. Brussels watched for the buying and selling of persons, so the Italians stopped buying and selling persons. Geneva watched for compulsion to labour, so the Italians compelled residence and let the labour follow. Neither body was fooled about any fact. Both were answered.

The men

One further extraction should be recorded here even though its accounting belongs to the grim accounting.

In October 1935 Somalia became the southern front for the invasion of Ethiopia under Graziani. The colony that had been conquered in part by imported Eritrean battalions now furnished its own: Somali *ascari*, *dubats* and *zaptié*, formed over three decades, were spent on a war that was not Somali in a country that was not Somalia. Eritrea's study found that colony's true export to be its men. Somalia received that export in 1925 and

made the same export in 1935. **The Horn colonies were, among other things, a machine for converting one African population into the instrument of the next conquest**, and Somalia is the only case in the corpus that was both the destination and the source within a decade.

Where the surplus actually came from

Now the question the two opening numbers force, and the answer is the module's contribution.

The colony did not pay. Podestà's account of Italian colonial economics identifies the standing short circuit: the state lacked adequate means, so it constantly tried to involve private capital by handing private firms the exploitation of colonial resources; but the meagreness of public investment and the absence of infrastructure discouraged private capital, Italian and foreign alike, which was always wary of colonial ventures. The Somali case runs that circuit exactly. Two chartered companies failed. State contributions stood at a hundred and ten million lire in 1926 and were cut to fifty-five million in the 1928–29 budget. The switch from cotton to banana monoculture, which the regime pushed after the 1929 crash halved the cotton price, is judged in the Italian scholarship to have ruined the agricultural companies that made it. The salt works turned a profit and was owned by a Milanese firm selling to India.

So who was being extracted from?

The Italian taxpayer, at something over a hundred million lire a year in the mid-1920s, declining thereafter — a subsidy that went to build a barrage, a railway, canals, a port and an administration whose principal beneficiaries were about a hundred and fifty Italian concessionaires.

And after 1935, the Italian consumer. The Regia Azienda Monopolio Banane, established by decree-law of 2 December 1935 no. 2085 under the Ministry of Colonies, existed because Somali bananas could not compete on price. It took the transport and marketing of the fruit into a state monopoly, closed the Italian market to competitors, built depots in the principal cities and commissioned refrigerated ships for the Mogadishu–Naples run. Italian banana consumption reached four hundred and fifty thousand quintals in 1939. Somali imports in 1937 were two hundred and twenty-six thousand five hundred and twenty-five. **The monopoly's function was to make**

Italians buy, at a protected price, a fruit their own state had decided to grow in the Shebelle, and the margin between the protected price and the world price is the actual revenue stream of the late colony.

Notice where that leaves the Somalis. They were not the source of the surplus, because there was no surplus. What was taken from them — the land, the water, the labour, the legal capacity to own — was taken as the **input a transfer required**, not as the transfer's yield. The dispossession was complete and the coercion was real and the enterprise still lost money for fifty years, because the money was never going to come out of the crop. It came out of Rome, and then out of the Italian shopping basket, and it went to a hundred and fifty concessionaires, a shipping line, a monopoly board and the men who had followed De Vecchi from Turin.

That structure is also why it outlived the empire. The Azienda Monopolio Banane was reconstituted in 1950 and ran until 1964, when it collapsed in a corruption scandal; Italian tariff protection for Somali bananas continued into the 1960s. An extraction that runs on a metropolitan transfer does not need the colony to be profitable and does not need the colony to be Italian. It needs only the statute.

Reading Somali extraction against the pattern

The contribution: where the extraction column does not balance, do not conclude there was no extraction — find the metropolitan constituency being transferred from, and name the instrument doing it. The manual already holds that the ledger can run backward in a surplus-poor settler colony, sustained as a net drain while land and room flow out, so that "follow the surplus" becomes follow the dispossession. Somalia is a third case which that formulation does not cover, because it was not a settler colony in the demographic sense — the Italian civilian population is given variously between about 1,700 in the late 1920s and about 22,000 in 1930, and the concessions were worked by Somali hands, not Italian ones. What Somalia was is **a mechanism for transferring wealth from Italian taxpayers and Italian consumers to a small class of Italian concessionaires, using Somali land, water and coerced labour as the necessary medium.**

The operational instruction follows. Where a colony extracts hard and loses money for decades, the question is not whether the extraction was real — it was, and the people it fell

on paid in full — but **who in the metropole is paying, through what statute, and to whom.** Look for the three instruments that make such a transfer possible: a budget subsidy, a protective tariff, and a marketing monopoly. All three are metropolitan legislation; none of them appears in any colonial export table; and together they explain why an unprofitable extraction persists, which the pattern's usual accounting cannot. The diagnostic is that **an extraction sustained by metropolitan transfer will survive the loss of the colony**, because the constituency it serves is at home — and the Somali case supplies the test, since the banana monopoly outlived Italian sovereignty by two decades and died of a scandal in Rome rather than of anything in Africa.

The second contribution: a compliance regime specifies the conduct that is not the offence, and practice migrates into that space. The robe was cut for an audience that audited; the audit was satisfied. Between 1890 and 1934 Italy signed two international instruments against unfree labour — the General Act of Brussels and ILO Convention 29 — and observed both. The Brussels Act watched the law of persons, so the traffic ended and the ordinance of 1903 was filed. Convention 29 watched compulsion to labour, so the compulsion was applied to residence and the labour followed from the residence. **Where a colonial power is subject to a specified international standard, expect the coercion to be relocated rather than abandoned, and expect the relocation to be into whatever category the standard does not name.** The archive of a scrupulous coloniser is therefore not evidence of gentleness but evidence of what was being inspected.

Two confirmations, stated as confirmations. First, the extraction fork holds and the case sits on the rate side, but with the amendment the cost column introduced: what was taken first was neither a flow nor a stock but a legal capacity, and a capacity cannot be tuned. Second, the "just enough" equilibrium is visible in the customs era and vanishes after 1908, exactly as one would predict when the object changes from a rate on a flow to the ground itself.

And one correction to an earlier finding. The cost column recorded, provisionally, that no head or hut tax could be found in Italian Somalia, and inferred a legibility precondition for the medium-of-payment mechanism. That stands, but it needs a qualification: the organic law of 5 April 1908 expressly gave the colony's civil governor the power to fix the taxation of native activities, along with export duties, the exchange rate and the regulation of hunting and fishing. **The power existed from 1908.** Whether it

was ever used to build a coin-denominated levy on a subsistence population, and if not why not, is now a specific question with a specific place to look — the governors' *relazioni*, and De Vecchi's budget report for 1926–27 in particular — and the grim accounting should not be attempted until it has been answered.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. The customs schedule and the articles on public domain, mines, forests and arms are quoted or paraphrased from the Filonardi Company's provisional regulation of 14 March 1895, and Article VI of the Italo-Zanzibari convention of 12 August 1892 from its French text, both as printed in Carlo Rossetti, *Manuale di legislazione della Somalia italiana, volume secondo: Documenti 1892–1908* (Rome, 1912), a public-domain official publication used throughout. No new primary text is quoted at length here.

Statistical series, with provenance. The banana series — hectares planted and quintals imported into Italy, year by year from 1926 to 1937 — originates in Luigi Fioresi, "Il commercio mondiale delle banane", in *L'Autarchia Alimentare*, and is used here as reproduced in Diana Garvin's article on bananas and Italian Somaliland in *The Italianist* 43:3 (2023). It is therefore a Fascist-era Italian trade statistic at one remove, and it measures **imports into Italy**, not Somali production; the two diverge by whatever was consumed locally, spoiled or shipped elsewhere. A separate Italian source gives nearly 270,000 quintals for 1938 and puts Italian consumption at 450,000 quintals in 1939; the second figure is metropolitan consumption from all sources and must not be read as a Somali export figure. The SAIS production figures for 1931 — 401,783 quintals of cane, 37,830 of maize, 10,703 of cotton, 5,928 of bananas — are the company's own as reproduced on an Italian colonial-commemorative site, and are peak-year figures presented as such by an admiring source.

The budget figures — state contributions of 110,000,000 lire in 1926 cut to 55,025,000 in the 1928–29 budget — are from Sessa's study of Fascist monetary policy in Somalia in *Diacronie* (2021), which cites the colonial financial record. They are the single most load-bearing numbers here and rest on one secondary source; they should be corroborated.

Reported rather than quoted. The *contratto di colonia*, its extension to all agricultural districts by governorial decree no. 7475 of 1929, Italy's ratification in June 1934 of ILO

Convention 29 of 1930, and the description of the contract at the Paris labour conference of 1935 as an appreciable instrument of civil, social and economic progress, are **reported from Italian colonial-commemorative publication and are not verified**. The framing there is explicitly apologetic — the same source opens by asserting that Somali workers had contracts and that slavery did not exist — and while the ratification date and the decree number are the kind of fact such a source has no motive to invent, the characterisation attributed to the Paris conference should be checked against the ILO record before it is quoted anywhere as established. It is used here because the argument turns on the *conjunction* of a genuine ratification with a documented practice of guarding workers, and that conjunction survives even if the Paris compliment does not.

The Hafun salt works — the Società Saline e Industrie della Somalia Settentrionale constituted at Milan in 1922, construction from 1922 to about 1929, production from 1931, over 300,000 tonnes a year, principally to India, the town of five thousand, the plant described — is from reference sources and from an Italian colonial site reproducing an article in *L'Illustrazione Italiana* of 20 July 1930. The claim that it was the largest salt works in the world, and the comparison with Massawa, Djibouti and Aden, are that article's and are the colonial press's own boast.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. Gian Luca Podestà, *Il mito dell'impero. Economia, politica e lavoro nelle colonie italiane dell'Africa orientale 1898–1941* (Turin, 2004), for the structural account of the short circuit between scarce public means and reluctant private capital; the summary here is drawn from published descriptions of the book and from citations to it, and the book itself has not been read, which is a serious gap for an extraction module and should be closed. Annalisa Urbano, "A 'Grandiose Future for Italian Somalia'" (*ILWCH* 92, 2017), for the finding that development planning institutionalised forced labour, disrupted local foodstuff production and made the colony dependent on imports. I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, for compulsory recruitment in the Gosha and the necessity of guards. Lee V. Cassanelli, "The End of Slavery and the 'Problem' of Farm Labor in Colonial Somalia" (1988), for the vagrancy analysis — still used at second hand, still unread, and now the most important outstanding item in the whole study. Francesca Declich for the compulsory-marriage recruitment. Caterina Scalvedi for De Vecchi's settlement policy and the missionary brief.

Contested figures. The Italian civilian population of the colony is given by different sources as about 1,700 at the end of the De Vecchi period, about 22,000 in 1930 with some 10,000 in Mogadishu, and over 30,000 in Mogadishu alone by March 1940 constituting a third of a city of 90,000. These cannot all be right and are not reconciled here; they are recorded as a range and as a warning, and the grim accounting will need a defensible series. The granted concession area is assembled from separate figures (25,000 hectares to SAIS, about 20,000 at Genale, a dozen unquantified concessions on the Juba) and the total of forty-five to fifty thousand is arithmetic on those numbers, not a source's figure. The claim that the concessions were acquired by purchase agreements with the natives is the concessionaires' own and sits awkwardly beside the public-domain declaration of 1895; it is recorded and not adopted. **No wage rates, labour-force totals or hours are given, because none have been obtained** — the mechanism of the labour extraction and the crop it produced can be shown, but not its price, and that remains the largest quantitative hole in the whole account.

MODULE 7

PRISONERS OF THE SUN

Information and suppression — four international reporting regimes in forty years, all of them answered; one concealment from the powers, and what it proves; the single occasion on which the metropole looked and acted, and why that once; and the one book the censor actually stopped, which was about Italians.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Where the censor turns up

In 1939 the review *L'Italia d'Oltremare* began serialising a novel by Dante Saccani called *I prigionieri del sole — Vita dei concessionari di Genale*, The Prisoners of the Sun: Life of the Genale Concessionaires. It was cut repeatedly and was never published in full. The complete text, with the passages removed under the *ventennio* and three chapters that had never appeared at all, was printed for the first time in the twenty-first century.

That is, so far as the record shows, the clearest single documented act of censorship directed at the Italian reading public on the subject of Italian Somalia in fifty-two years. And it is a novel about the Italians.

Hold that beside what was not censored. The declaration that all uncultivated land without an ascertained owner belonged to the Kingdom of Italy was printed by the Ministry of Colonies in 1912. The bombardment of Warsheikh was explained to the Chamber of Deputies in 1890, with the number of shells. Di Giorgio's burning of Mererè was reported in the *Corriere della Sera* in September 1908 by a correspondent travelling with the column, who called it a painful political necessity. The forced-labour recruitment of the Gosha District is in the standard histories drawn from Italian administrative sources. The abolition of slavery, the campaign of the sultanates, the concessions, the barrage, the monopoly — all published, much of it by the state itself.

What the Fascist censor stopped was a story about the hardship of the colonisers. Everything about the hardship of the colonised went out under a government imprint.

The general shape of European colonial information is that censorship faces inward at the conquered rather than homeward at the public paying for the conquest, because inattention at home is free and a censor is expensive, so that the suppression map of an empire is a map not of its crimes but of its constituencies' thresholds. Italian Somalia bears that out in outline. But it has a third audience the ordinary two-party model does not have to price, and it produces one clean exception at home and one clean concealment abroad, and those three things together are what this stretch of the account is for.

What went out, and to whom

Begin with the outward flow, because the natural expectation is that Italy would have worked hard to control what the other European powers were told, and the record does not show that at all. It shows the opposite: a forty-year sequence of international reporting regimes, every one of which Italy joined and answered.

The General Act of Brussels, 1890. The robe established the machinery: Article LXXXI requiring the powers to communicate their laws and regulations in execution of the Act together with statistical information on the slave trade and on slaves detained and liberated; Article LXXXII centralising the exchange in a special office at Brussels; Article LXXXIV providing that the documents be collected, published periodically, addressed to all the signatory powers, and accompanied each year by an analytical table. The annual series ran at Hayez in Brussels from 1893 to 1914. Rossetti's compilation records that Italy's Somali slavery measures were among the few colonial texts communicated annually to that office and printed there.

The Slavery Convention of Geneva, 1926, to which Italy was a party, and which obliged its signatories to bring about the complete abolition of slavery in all its forms and to prevent forced labour developing into conditions analogous to slavery.

The Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery, the League of Nations' first permanent slavery committee, inaugurated in 1933, which conducted a global investigation and asked all member states, expressly including the major colonial empires, to report on every form of slavery and slave trading within their territories.

ILO Convention no. 29 on Forced Labour, 1930, ratified by Italy in June 1934 for the metropolitan territory and for all its colonies — after which, in 1935, the Somali colonate contract was described at the international labour conference at Paris, in the account

transmitted by the Italian colonial literature, as an appreciable instrument of civil, social and economic progress to the benefit of the workers concerned.

Four regimes, forty-four years, all answered. **There is no evidence in anything examined that Italy concealed the Somali labour system from the European powers, and considerable evidence that it filed on it.** What the extraction established is the reason: there was nothing to conceal in the categories the regimes specified. Brussels asked about the buying and selling of persons, and by 1903 Italy had prohibited it and could report the prohibition. Geneva asked about slavery in all its forms, and nobody in Somalia owned anybody. The ILO asked about compulsion to labour, and the instrument compelling Somalis was a residence contract. The compliance was real, in the sense that the returns were accurate. It was also, in the sense that matters, empty — because a regime that specifies an offence specifies the conduct that is not the offence, and an administration facing a schedule migrates into the space the schedule leaves.

So the answer is: **Italy did not need to control the information going to the powers, because the powers had told it in writing what they proposed to look at, and it had rearranged its conduct accordingly.** That is not concealment. It is compliance in the exact and hollow sense the word has when the auditor publishes his checklist in advance.

The one thing Italy did hide, and what it proves

Which raises the test. Was Italy simply incapable of, or uninterested in, concealment toward the powers? No. It was capable, and it did it, once, at scale — and the exception maps the threshold precisely.

In 1935–36 Italy invaded Ethiopia. Somalia was the southern front, under Graziani, and the colony's ascari, dubats and zaptié furnished part of the force. During that war the Italian armed forces used chemical weapons — mustard gas, delivered by air and by artillery — in breach of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, to which Italy was a party. The Ethiopian government reported it to the League of Nations. Italy denied it, and went on denying it, and the Italian state did not admit it until the 1990s.

Set that beside the labour returns and Lugard's telegraph, and the rule of The Empty Column comes out of the Somali case intact and sharpened.

What a regime bothers to hide is a map of what its audience would actually punish. Italy filed candidly on labour in Somalia for four decades because nobody was going to do anything about labour in Somalia. It lied for sixty years about gas in Ethiopia because gas was a breach of a treaty during a war under active League scrutiny, with sanctions already voted, in front of an audience that had shown it could be moved on that particular subject and no other. The two behaviours belong to the same government in the same decade, and the difference between them is not moral, and it is not about the gravity of the conduct. It is about which conduct had a constituency attached.

The exception at home: one occasion, and why that once

Now the other test, and the more interesting one, because Italian Somalia contains the thing The Empty Column's cases mostly lacked: an occasion on which the metropole looked, minded, and acted.

The sequence was set out with the robe and needs only its mechanism restated here. In 1903 the Società Antischiavista d'Italia commissioned the explorer Luigi Robecchi Bricchetti to go to the Benadir and report; his letters were published as *Dal Benadir* in 1904. A naval investigation reported that slaves were still entering the ports, that the most recent arrivals dated from the previous December, and that slaves were bought and sold in the towns under the eyes of the Italian authorities and on the registers of the qadis of Mogadishu. A commission the Benadir Company itself appointed to disprove the charges confirmed them. There was a press campaign, then a parliamentary debate, then the government's denunciation of the 1898 convention, and on 13 January 1905 the purchase of full sovereignty and the dissolution of the Company on 14 February.

Metropolitan attention fired. The Empty Column holds that this is rare and that when it happens the scandal is usually ventilated and passes. Here it did not pass; it cost a chartered company its colony. So the case is a partial break in that paper's finding, and the useful work is to say why it broke.

Three conditions were present together, and all three appear to have been necessary.

First, an organised constituency that already cared, with a subscription list and a purse. The Antischiavista was not public opinion in general; it was a specific Catholic association founded in 1888 out of Lavigerie's crusade, with the standing to commission a

traveller and publish him. Diffuse metropolitan sentiment does nothing. An association with a budget can buy a ticket.

Second, a standard the government had already signed. Robecchi Bricchetti's charge was not that something regrettable was happening. It was that Italy was in breach of engagements it had contracted before seventeen states at Brussels and had guaranteed. That converted an argument about African conditions, which the objectors would have lost, into an argument about Italian good faith, which they won. **The Landscape's proposition survives in this amended form: the treaty's value to the objector is not enforcement but unanswerability at home.**

Third — and this is the condition The Empty Column does not yet name — the wrongdoer was a delegate and not the state. The Benadir Company was a Milanese joint-stock firm. Acting against it cost the Italian government nothing, embarrassed no minister, indicted no policy and required no admission. Indeed acting against it was positively convenient, since the state had wanted to bring the colony under direct rule and now had a warrant and a public demanding it. **Metropolitan attention converts into metropolitan action most readily when the fault can be located in an agent the state can disown** — which is one of the underrated advantages of chartered-company colonialism to the chartering state, and a reason to expect scandals in company colonies to produce takeovers rather than reforms.

The corollary is bleak and should be stated. After 1905 the responsible party was the Italian state itself, and no comparable scandal ever fired again, through thirty-six further years that included compulsory recruitment, a concentration camp, and a war of conquest launched from the colony's own territory. The one time the machinery worked, it worked because there was somebody else to blame.

Inward: the suppression that was real

Toward Somalis the apparatus was not thin at all, and it ran in three registers.

The column. Modules 1 and 4 gave the instances: the bombardment of Nimow in 1897, a settlement built round a teaching centre founded by a Mogadishu scholar who had removed himself rather than live under the flag; the burning of Mererè in August 1908, twice, the second time properly, after the civilians had been evacuated; the reprisal burnings of Gellai, Res and Lafoole in 1897; the twenty-two-hour bombardment of

Bargal and the destruction of Bender Bela in 1925. The pattern's usual question about an interpreter class and its two valves does not quite fit here, and the reason it does not fit is itself the finding: **Italy did not need to control what Somalis were told, because it was not telling them anything.** There was no authorised reading to feed and no rival reading to starve, because Italy had never entered the competition. What it suppressed was not a doctrine but an organisation, and it suppressed it with artillery.

The removal of persons. In 1925 Sultan Ali Yusuf of Hobyo and the whole of his family were arrested and taken by force to Mogadishu. Boqor Osman Mahamuud of the Majeerteen surrendered towards the end of 1927; his son Hersi Boqor continued from Ethiopia for years. Sheikh Abdi Abikar Gaafle, who had led the Biimaal coalition, died in 1922 at Laantabuur. The physical removal of the men through whom information and authority ran is a suppression technique that leaves no censorship record at all — and the usual evidence base for suppression, indices of banned works, sedition trials, security-organ files, would return nothing for Italian Somalia while missing almost everything that was done.

The camp. After the Ethiopian war Italy established a concentration camp at Danane, on the coast south-west of Mogadishu, in the country of the Biimaal and on the ground where Di Giorgio had put his headquarters in 1908. It is recorded as having held some six thousand people, mostly Ethiopians who had resisted Italian rule in East Africa, and many accounts report that about half its population died of malnutrition, malaria and other disease. It is worth saying plainly what that means for the colony's information history: the principal purpose-built instrument of political detention in Italian Somalia was built to hold the nationals of a country Italy had invaded from Somalia, and its dead are counted in a literature about Ethiopia rather than about Somalia.

Inward: the suppression that needed no censor

And then the register that produced no acts at all, which is where the formation finding comes back.

There was no Somali press to censor. The colony's first newspaper, the *Corriere della Somalia*, appeared at Mogadishu in 1929, in Italian; it was renamed *Somalia Fascista* in 1934; the other periodicals — *Somalia Cristiana*, *Somalia Sportiva* — were also Italian. Nothing was published for Somalis in Somali, and nothing could have been, because

Somali had no official written form and would not have one until 1972. The British, arriving in 1941, produced a paper in three languages within four years, which establishes that the thing was possible and that Italy had not attempted it.

There was no Somali secondary schooling to police, because there was none above the third elementary year. There was no Somali documentary record to seize, because the only indigenous writing system in the country was Arabic in the hands of the qadis and the *dugsi*, and the qadis' registers had been captured in 1895 by the simple expedient of appointing them, sealing their judgments with a trading company's stamp and taxing every conveyance they recorded at one per cent.

An order that has never written anything in a people's language has no need of an index of prohibited books. This is the inward mirror of the Empty Column's central point. Toward the metropole, the censor was unnecessary because inattention was free. Toward the Somalis, the censor was unnecessary because the channel had never been opened. In neither direction was there much for a censor to do, and in neither direction should the absence be read as liberality.

The administration's account of what it had freed

One document deserves to stand at the end, because it is the point at which the inward and outward faces of the seam touch, and because it shows the colonial record producing its own justification without any editing at all.

Italian colonial sources of the 1910s describe what emancipation had produced. The freed slave, they record, understands by freedom only the right to do nothing; apart from the few who join the freedmen's villages on the Shebelle or the Juba and take up farming on their own account, the men turn to idleness and vagrancy and the women to prostitution.

That passage was written by officials of a government whose international title rested on having freed those people, in a colony where the freedmen's flight from the plantations was officially classified as the cause of the labour shortage, in the years when the Resident in the Gosha District was compelling them back onto the estates. It requires no suppression to function. It is not addressed to Somalis, who would have recognised it as false; it is not concealed from the powers, who were not asking; and it is not disguised from Italians, who had no reason to doubt it. **It is a description of the consequences of emancipation which is simultaneously the warrant for compulsion, published**

in the ordinary course of administration by a state that saw no tension in it at all. That is what an order looks like when nobody needs to lie.

Reading Somali information control against the pattern

The confirmation, and a third audience to carry. The rule holds here without amendment — what a regime bothers to hide maps what its audience would punish — and Italian Somalia supplies an unusually clean pair of readings from a single government in a single decade: candid annual returns on colonial labour, and a sixty-year lie about poison gas. But the ordinary model has two audiences, the conquered and the metropole, and this case has three. The **jury of powers** was the primary audience of the Somali robe, and the finding here is that **an order facing an audience that publishes its own inspection criteria will not conceal; it will comply, and it will comply by relocating conduct into the unspecified category.** That is a cheaper and more durable answer to scrutiny than concealment, and it leaves an archive of honest returns which a later historian may easily mistake for evidence of decent conduct. The operational instruction: **where a colonial power is subject to a specified international standard, read its filings as a map of the standard rather than of the practice, and go looking for the practice in whatever the standard does not name.**

The contribution: metropolitan attention converts to action when the fault sits in a delegate. The Empty Column's cases show attention rarely firing and, when it fires, passing. Somalia 1903–05 is a case where it fired and bit, and the third of the three conditions is the one the paper does not yet have. A constituency with a purse and a treaty standard were both necessary; what made them sufficient was that the accused was a chartered company rather than the state. Acting cost the government nothing, indicted no policy, and delivered an outcome the government already wanted. **Expect scandals in company-administered colonies to produce state takeovers rather than reforms of conduct; and expect the same scandal, once the state itself is the operator, not to fire at all** — which is exactly what happened in Somalia for the following thirty-six years, across a scale of coercion the Benadir Company never approached.

The refinement on the inward valves. The manual asks the study to identify the interpreter class and show it working an inflow valve, feeding an authorised reading, and an outflow valve, starving the rival. That instrument returns almost nothing here, and the reason is diagnostic rather than evidential. **A coloniser who never attempts formation**

never occupies the seam, and therefore has no valves to work; his information policy consists entirely of suppressing the *organisation* of the rival interpreter class, not its content — which is why the Italian record contains no index of banned books and does contain the shelling of a religious school, the deportation of two sultanates' ruling families, and a camp. Where a study finds no censorship apparatus in a colonial case, it should ask whether the order ever entered the competition for belief at all, and if not, look for the suppression in the military and police record rather than the cultural one.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. No new primary text is quoted at length here. The Brussels Act articles, Rossetti's prefatory note, the ordinance of 2 March 1903 and the 1895 regulation are as quoted with the settlement and the robe, from public-domain sources identified there.

Reported rather than quoted, and flagged. The censorship of Dante Saccani's *I prigionieri del sole — Vita dei concessionari di Genale*, serialised in *L'Italia d'Oltremare* in 1939, cut and never published entire, is reported from the publisher's description of the modern edition prepared by Alberto Alpozzi for Eclettica Edizioni; the serial, the cuts, and any independent account of them remain unseen, and the claim rests on an interested modern source. Given that it carries a good deal of weight here it should be verified, though the direction of the source's interest — colonial-commemorative — runs against any motive to invent Fascist censorship of a colonial novel. Italy's ratification of ILO Convention 29 in June 1934 and the characterisation of the colonate contract at Paris in 1935 are reported from the same family of sources and were flagged with the extraction; the ratification should be confirmed against the ILO register, which would take one search and has not been done. The passage on what emancipation produced — freedom understood as the right to do nothing, the men to idleness and vagrancy, the women to prostitution — is quoted in modern reference material as from Italian colonial records of the 1910s without a full citation; it is given here in paraphrase rather than as a verbatim quotation for that reason, and the original should be located before it is quoted anywhere as a document.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. The Danane camp — its establishment after the Ethiopian war, its recorded population of about six thousand,

mostly Ethiopian, and the reports that about half died of malnutrition, malaria and disease — is from Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, at second hand. Italian use of chemical weapons in Ethiopia in 1935–36, the denial before the League of Nations, and the eventual Italian admission in the 1990s are treated here as established in the general historiography and are stated without a specific citation because Ethiopia is not the subject here; if the point is to bear weight in the grim accounting it must be sourced properly. The League of Nations Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery, inaugurated 1933, and its request to member states including the colonial empires, is from the reference literature summarising Suzanne Miers. Alessandro Bufalini's chapter on reparation for colonial crimes in the Scovazzi volume analyses which international instruments Italy had ratified and could have breached; it is in the open-access volume used throughout and has not yet been read, which it should be before the grim accounting.

On the two labour-history gaps flagged earlier, and progress against them. Lee Cassanelli's work is now within closer reach but is still not read. The relevant chapter is "The Ending of Slavery in Italian Somalia: Liberty and the Control of Labor", in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1988), pages 308 and following — a different piece from the conference paper cited in earlier modules, and the more important of the two. Its opening case, as summarised in the later literature, is a man named Salemi, captured on the Mrima coast about 1883, sold at Merca to Sherif Omar, transferred in 1896 to Abiker bin Mire in settlement of a debt, worked hard in the fields and held in leg irons, who fled to the coast in 1903–04 after the abolition laws, as many others fled the estates. Gian Luca Podestà's *Il mito dell'impero* remains unread and the budget figures in the extraction remain uncorroborated.

And one live scholarly dispute the account has to confront. The opening landscape's central correction — that Italy found servile labour in the river valleys but no plantation system, because the clan land regime prevented estates forming — is not the settled consensus it was presented as. Omar A. Eno has published on precisely this ground under the title "Landless Landlords, and Landed Tenants: Plantation Slavery in Southern Somalia, 1840–1940", which asserts a plantation slavery running from four decades before the Italians arrived to the end of their rule. That is a direct challenge to the landscape's finding and, through it, to the framing of the settlement, the cost column and the extraction. Eno remains unread, and it cannot yet be said whether the disagreement is

substantive or terminological — whether he means concentrated estates of a Caribbean kind or servile agricultural labour under lineage control, which is what the landscape granted. The point is registered here as unresolved; the closing pages return to it and give the formulation that survives.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

MODULE 8

ONE PURSE

Elite coordination and the default — the chain from a ministry in Rome to a district officer on the Shebelle, audited link by link; the discovery that every man in it was paid from the same purse; and the four fractures, all of them Italian.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What the module is asking

The default is the property that makes a durable hierarchy cheap to run. It is not loyalty and it is not conspiracy. It is the condition in which each man in the arrangement, by defending his own position, thereby defends the whole — so that people who dislike each other, distrust each other and have no shared project nevertheless coordinate to keep the thing standing, because each of them would be worse off if it fell. Orders that have it survive their own incompetents. Orders that lack it need continuous management from the centre, and fracture when a group with standing and means stops benefiting.

So the chain runs from the metropolitan treasury down to the man with a rifle standing at the edge of a banana field, and at every link the question is the same: *if this arrangement collapsed tomorrow, would this man be better or worse off?* The answer, link by link, is the order's real constitution — and in Italian Somalia the answers do not come out the way the other colonial cases have come out.

The chain

The Italian taxpayer. At the top. Paying, in the mid-1920s, something over a hundred million lire a year for a colony that exported forty-five quintals of bananas in 1927 and never covered its administration. If the arrangement collapsed tomorrow he would be better off, immediately and measurably. **The first link in the chain has a negative interest in the whole and always did.**

Parliament. The law of 5 April 1908 divided colonial competence between parliament, the government of the Kingdom and the government of the colony. Parliament voted the subsidy and could have stopped it. It did not, for the reason the suppression module gave: inattention is free. Its interest is neutral, which in practice means it defends the arrangement by not attending to it.

The Ministry. Colonial affairs ran first through the Central Directorate of Colonial Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, then from 1912 through a Ministry of Colonies, then from 1937 through the Ministry of Italian Africa; alongside it sat the Consiglio Superiore Coloniale, through whose Department for Financial and Economic Affairs every colonial financial request had to pass — a company's application for a loan going from the colonial government to the Ministry and thence to the Council. This link has an unambiguous interest: **a ministry of colonies requires colonies.** It is the most reliably committed body in the entire chain and it is four thousand miles from the ground.

The Governor. Under the 1908 law he controlled export duties, the exchange rate, the taxation of native activities, the regulation of hunting and fishing, and the police. On paper the most powerful man in the arrangement. In practice a man passing through: Filonardi, Sorrentino, Dulio, Mercatelli, Cerrina Ferroni, Carletti, De Martino, De Vecchi, Corni, Rava, Graziani, Santini, Caroselli, Pesenti, De Simone — fifteen or so in fifty years, average tenure under four years, every one of them with a career that continued in Italy or in another colony afterwards. De Martino went on to Eritrea and then Cyrenaica; Mercatelli to Tripolitania; De Vecchi to the Rhodes governorship and then to the Ministry of National Education; Graziani to Ethiopia. He titled his Somali memoir *Orizzonti d'impero: cinque anni in Somalia* — Horizons of Empire: Five Years in Somalia — and the subtitle is the point.

Ask the default question of a governor and the answer is peculiar. If the colony collapsed he would be transferred. What he needs from the arrangement is not its durability but **a visible achievement inside four years**: a barrage completed in twenty-five months, a cathedral consecrated by a prince, a campaign concluded with sixteen thousand five hundred rifles counted. That is a real interest and it produced real works, and it is not the same interest as the arrangement's survival — which is why Somalia acquired a dam, a railway, a cathedral and a conquest, and never acquired a fiscal base.

The Resident and the District Commissioner. The line officers. Mercatelli's six subdivisions in 1905 — Brava, Merca, Lugh, Itala, Bardera, Giumbo — grew into the

residencies and commissariats of the Fascist period, including a vice-commissariat for the Genale district specifically. These men were salaried Italian officials with no property in the colony and no expectation of remaining there. Their interest in the arrangement is their post, and their post is a line in a ministry budget.

The concessionaire. Here the chain acquires, for the first time, a man with something in Somalia he could lose: a hundred or so farms at Genale of between seventy-five and six hundred hectares, the SAIS on twenty-five thousand hectares at Villabruzzi, a dozen holdings on the Juba, some hundred and fifty concessionaires in all across the colony's life. He would be worse off if the arrangement collapsed, and he is therefore the pattern's classic defender.

Except that what he was defending was not in Somalia. The extraction established where his margin came from: not from the crop, which lost money for most of the period and ruined the companies that went into banana monoculture after 1931, but from a state subsidy, a protective tariff and, from December 1935, a marketing monopoly — three instruments enacted in Rome. **The concessionaire's position was a metropolitan statute with a farm attached**, and when he lobbied he lobbied the Ministry of Colonies, not the Governor. This is why the arrangement's most committed private beneficiary was simultaneously its least useful defender on the ground: his energies went where his benefit came from.

The askari, the zaptié, the dubat. The cost column audited this link and the answer was the cleanest in the chain: pay, rations, a rifle, rank, standing, a formation as thorough as any Italy ran, and near-total absence of mutiny across fifty years. He would be much worse off if the arrangement fell. He is also, by statute, permanently barred from citizenship whatever he does, so what he defends is his slot and nothing above it. And his pay comes from the same budget line as everyone else's.

The appointed capo, the notable, the qadi. The bottom Somali link and the thinnest. The administration approached the chiefs and notables of the clans to secure their cooperation, and the Somali pastoral leaderships took the offer for two reasons the literature identifies: access to the colonial officials, which made a man the channel between his people and the power; and the payroll, which was in itself a public recognition of his standing. The qadis had been appointed, sealed and salaried since the 1895 regulation.

Now hold that link against the pattern's central instrument. The Buganda chief received eight square miles as an estate. The Sokoto emir kept his court, his law and his revenues. The Transjordanian shaykh became the largest landowner in the country. In every case the co-opted man got **a thing**, transmissible to his sons, defensible in a court the conqueror ran, and worth defending because it was his. The Somali *capo* got a salary. He got no land, because the land was demanio; no office his son would inherit, because the appointment was the governor's; and no jurisdiction beyond what a district commissioner allowed him this year. **His position was not a possession. It was a job.**

The audit, and what it returns

Read the chain back and one property is common to every link that held.

The ministry's interest is a ministry budget. The governor's is a posting. The resident's is a salary. The askari's is a wage. The capo's is a stipend. The concessionaire's is a subsidy, a tariff and a monopoly. **Every single position in Italian Somalia that had a reason to defend the arrangement was funded, directly or through a metropolitan statute, from Rome.**

That is not a default. That is a payroll.

The distinction matters and it is the module's contribution, so it wants stating carefully. A default in the pattern's sense is a structure in which each man's benefit is *sourced from the arrangement itself* — from land he holds under it, revenues he collects within it, a position his lineage occupies because the order exists — so that the arrangement reproduces without instruction, survives the centre's distraction, and can carry a decade of neglect or an incompetent apex without anyone deciding anything. It is the property that made the Buganda settlement of 1900 outlast three generations of British indifference, and it is why the Sokoto emirate machinery ran for sixty years on one political officer per hundred thousand subjects.

A payroll looks exactly like a default while the purse is open. Every man defends his position; every position implies the arrangement; the whole thing hums. And the two are indistinguishable from the outside, at any given moment, by any observation the pattern's usual instruments make. The difference appears only under one test, and it is a test that is normally applied too late: **a genuine default fractures — at a seam, between groups, over a specific grievance, with some parts standing while others fall. A payroll**

default does not fracture. It evaporates, everywhere at once, on the day the payments stop.

Italian Somalia is the clean instance. In February 1941 the British took Mogadishu. The askari, the dubats, the zaptié, the capos, the qadis, the concessionaires and the residents did not divide into factions, did not fight one another for the succession, did not produce a collaborationist party and a resistance. The apparatus simply ceased, in a matter of weeks, across the whole colony, because there was nothing in it that had been sourced anywhere but Rome. The collapse will give the sequence, but the reason belongs here.

What Italy did where there was no chair

This is the hard case a segmentary society always poses: no permanent hierarchy, and therefore nothing for a conqueror to sit down in. *What do you rent when there is no chair?* The answer the record gives is a sequence of three attempts, each abandoned.

First, hire the men who did have chairs — and pay them to be sovereigns. The protection treaties of February and April 1889 put Hobyo and the Majeerteen under Italian protection for twelve hundred and eighteen hundred Maria Theresa thalers a year respectively, with six hundred more to Hobyo to keep the two priced evenly. This is the pattern's *Co-opt* family in its poorest form: not a grant purchasing service, and not a grant purchasing compliance, but **a retainer purchasing a signature** — because Italy had no force to offer and nothing else to trade. The sultans took it for their own reasons and continued to govern exactly as before, to the point that a treaty of November 1918 with Hobyo was made, in a later Italian official's disgusted phrase, on a basis of perfect equality, and provided that armed men crossing the boundary should be disarmed by the local authority and their weapons returned to whoever they belonged to — so that an Italian officer walking in the *protected* territory might be disarmed by the Sultan's askari.

Second, forge apexes where none existed. In the segmentary interior and among the riverine clans Italy did what the pattern's Kenya control case predicts a conqueror must do when he finds a durable order with no seat in it: it appointed. Capi were named, salaried and made the channel; qadis were appointed, their seals made the company's and their registers taxed. The manual's warning applies without amendment — *a throne you build yourself is a throne nobody kneels to* — and the running cost of the forgery was the Biimaal war, the columns, the burnt villages and, eventually, the guards in the fields.

Third, destroy the two chairs that were real. De Vecchi's Royal decree-law of 10 July 1925 redesignated the sultanates as *Italian possessions*; the campaign of 1925–27 followed; Ali Yusuf and his family were arrested and removed to Mogadishu; Boqor Osman surrendered at the end of 1927; Hersi Boqor went into Ethiopian exile. The only two positions in the country that had the properties a co-opted elite needs — a genuine apex, a following, a transmissible standing, a warrant — were the two positions Italy deliberately abolished, at the cost of two years of naval bombardment and blockade.

So the classification is this. **Italian Somalia begins by trying to co-opt, passes through a forged apex of the kind a settler colony builds where it finds no chair, and ends as neither** — a directly administered colony whose native elite consisted of salaried appointees with nothing to bequeath, and whose only substantial private interest was a class of foreign concessionaires living on metropolitan legislation. It is the rule that a settlement buying nobody is a wall, carried to its conclusion: not merely a wall that had to be manned, but a wall whose masons were on wages.

The four fractures, and all of them Italian

The module's last question is where fracture came from — where a group with standing and means stopped benefiting. In the pattern's usual colonial case the answer involves the conquered elite. Here it does not, for the sufficient reason that no conquered elite was ever inside the settlement. **Every fracture in fifty-two years of Italian Somalia occurred between Italians.**

1903–05: the delegate against the state. The suppression module set out the mechanism. The Benadir Company's officials and the military officers were at odds; the abolitionist society published; the inquiry the Company commissioned to clear itself convicted it; the Giolitti–Tittoni government denounced the convention and bought the colony. A private interest with standing and means was expelled from the arrangement by a public one, and the arrangement was strengthened by the expulsion. This is fracture working as a repair.

1908: the soldier against the civil governor. Major Di Giorgio wanted the whole lower Shebelle basin taken and every rising extirpated at its source; Governor Carletti wanted gradual expansion through dialogue with the Somali chiefs, including a degree of tolerance on the slave question. The Foreign Ministry under Tittoni backed the soldier's

line; the governor forbade the campaign's continuation and refused the annexation of the basin; Di Giorgio asked to be recalled and was; the socialist and radical press compared his columns to Leopold's mercenaries in the Congo; the Ministry of War praised him against the Foreign Ministry's officials. **Two Italian departments of state, with different constituencies and different currencies of advancement, running incompatible colonial policies through the same officers** — and the ground he had taken stayed taken, which is the standing lesson of that kind of fracture.

1923: the centre exporting its problem. De Vecchi arrived at Mogadishu on 8 December 1923 having fallen out with Mussolini. A *quadrumvir* of the March on Rome was not sent to the Horn because the Horn needed him; he was sent because Rome wanted him elsewhere. **A colonial governorship in this arrangement was among other things a disposal site for surplus claimants at the metropolitan apex** — a way of exporting a rival outward from the centre, and it explains a good deal about the energy with which the disposed then behaved. A man exiled to a governorship needs a conquest.

1936: the empire against the colony. The last and the largest. Somalia was the southern front for the invasion of Ethiopia and furnished part of the force. Ethiopia was then made the centre of Italian East Africa, and the resources were redirected to it; the Horn colony was left, in the judgement of the recent Italian scholarship on colonial finance, alone with its own limited possibilities for development. **The colony was cannibalised by the success it had been the platform for.** No Somali did that. It was done by the Ministry of Italian Africa, allocating between governorates.

Notice what is absent from that list. There is no Somali faction in it. There is no dispossessed chief turning the order's language back on it, no aggrieved intermediary class, no cut-out group of standing and means. The Biimaal war and the sultanate campaigns were resistance from outside the settlement, not fracture within it — and the difference is exactly that the Biimaal were never given anything to lose.

Reading the Somali default against the pattern

The contribution: distinguish a default from a payroll, and know that they are indistinguishable until the purse closes. The pattern's account of the default has always been that each beneficiary defends the whole by defending his own position. Italian Somalia satisfies that description completely and is nonetheless not a durable

arrangement, because **the *source* of each position matters as much as its existence.** Where a man's benefit is sourced from the arrangement — land held under it, revenue collected within it, an office his sons will hold because it exists — the default is real: it reproduces without instruction, tolerates neglect from the centre, and when it fails it fails at a seam. Where every man's benefit is a transfer from a single distant purse, what looks like a default is a wage bill. It behaves identically while the money flows and it has no failure mode except total and simultaneous cessation.

The diagnostic follows and is operational: **audit not whether each link benefits, but where each link's benefit is sourced.** Count the positions whose income would still exist if the metropole stopped paying next year. In Buganda the answer is a thousand chiefs on eight square miles each; in Northern Nigeria it is thirty emirates collecting their own revenues; in Italian Somalia the answer is approximately nobody. And the prediction the corpus should carry forward is that **an order with no locally sourced beneficiaries does not fracture, it evaporates** — so a study finding no fault line in a colonial arrangement should not conclude that the arrangement was well integrated. It should check whether there was anything in it that could have cracked.

The second contribution: a colonial governorship can be a disposal site, and the men disposed of behave accordingly. The manual treats Export as an outlet for a surplus claimant class — younger sons, surplus graduates — sent to a frontier so their ambition can be spent on somebody else. Italian Somalia shows the same instrument used at the very top, on a single dangerous individual, and shows the consequence. A *quadrumvir* of the March on Rome, at odds with the Duce, given a colony four thousand miles away, produced in five years two conquered sultanates, a barrage, a cathedral, a railway extension and a settlement district handed to his own political associates. **Where a governorship is being used to remove a claimant from the metropolitan apex, expect the colony to receive a burst of expensive, monumental and violent activity that answers the governor's problem rather than the colony's** — and expect it to be legible afterwards as achievement, because monuments and campaigns are exactly what leave a record.

The confirmation, and it is the standing warning of the method. The chain's weakest link is frequently at the top rather than the bottom, and here it was at the very top and was never anywhere else. The Italian taxpayer had a negative interest in the arrangement from 1889 to 1941 and was the only party who could end it, and the only

thing standing between him and that conclusion was that nobody put it to him in a form he had to answer. The suppression module explained why nobody did.

And a correction to the natural expectation. A segmentary structure looks as though it should make elite coordination the hard problem, because there is mostly no chair to rent. The answer turns out to be less interesting than the question, because Italy tried all three available answers — rent the chairs that existed, forge new ones, abolish the real ones — and the outcome was determined by something else entirely. **The absence of a native apex did not make the arrangement fragile. What made it fragile was that not one position in it, Somali or Italian, was funded from Somalia.** A conqueror who found a throne on the Shebelle and sat in it would have inherited the identical problem, because there was no revenue under the throne either — which is the finding the extraction reached from the money and this reaches from the men.

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. No new primary text is quoted here. The 1889 protection treaties and their annuities, the 1892 concession, the 1895 regulation's provisions on the qadis, the decree-law of 10 July 1925 and the 1908 organic law's division of competence are as given earlier, from the sources identified there.

Reported rather than quoted. The administrative architecture — the Central Directorate of Colonial Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Colonies from 1912, the Ministry of Italian Africa from 1937, and the Consiglio Superiore Coloniale with its Department for Financial and Economic Affairs through which colonial financial requests were routed — is assembled from citations in the scholarship on the SAIS and from reference sources; no organisational instrument has been consulted. The list of governors and their subsequent careers is from reference sources. Mercatelli's six subdivisions of 1905 and the later vice-commissariat for the Genale district are likewise reported. The account of the 1908 conflict between Di Giorgio and Carletti, including Tittoni's backing of the military line, the recall, the press comparison to the Congo and the War Ministry's commendation, is from an Italian colonial-commemorative article drawing on the period record; its framing is apologetic and its facts are used without its framing. That De Vecchi arrived in Somalia having fallen out with Mussolini is reported in the Italian literature and is not independently verified here; it carries some weight in the argument and should be checked. The judgement that resources were redirected to

Ethiopia after 1936, leaving Somalia to its own limited possibilities, is Sessa's in *Diacronie* (2021). The account of Somali chiefs and notables accepting colonial recognition for access and for the payroll is from the secondary literature on Somali responses to occupation and is reported at second hand.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. Gian Luca Podestà on colonial finance and the reluctance of private capital; Robert L. Hess and Angelo Del Boca for the administrative narrative; the comparative material on Buganda, Northern Nigeria, Transjordan and Kenya is from the studies already in the series rather than from fresh research.

On the Eno question raised earlier, which is now answered, and against the landscape. Omar A. Eno's chapter is "Landless Landlords and Landed Tenants: Plantation Slavery in Southern Somalia (1840–1940)", in Abdi M. Kusow, ed., *Putting the Cart Before the Horse: Contested Nationalism and the Crisis of the Nation-State in Somalia* (Trenton, 2004), pages 135–154. It remains unread. But the recent peer-reviewed literature that cites it states the position plainly: that the roughly fifty thousand enslaved people brought from south-east Africa to southern Somalia in the nineteenth century came **primarily to work on Somali-run agricultural plantations.** That is a substantive claim, not a terminological one, and it is incompatible with the landscape's assertion that the clan land regime prevented the concentrated coerced-labour holding from forming at all.

The best reading of the two together is this: **there was no alienable land and therefore no *assemblable merchant estate*, which is Cassanelli's point and is probably right; and there were nonetheless substantial concentrations of servile agricultural production under lineage control, which is Eno's point and is also probably right, and which a large part of the field is content to call plantation slavery.** If that is so, the landscape overstates in one direction and needs amendment rather than demolition — but the amendment is not cosmetic, because it changes what Italy is said to have done. The claim that Italy built the plantation the prior order had prevented fails. What survives is narrower and harder: **Italy did not create servile agricultural production in the Shebelle and Juba valleys; it abolished the legal form that production had taken, dispossessed the lineages that had controlled it, and reconstituted it under Italian title with the compulsion relocated from ownership to residence.** The cost column

and the extraction are compatible with that as written; the landscape is not, and it is the formulation the closing pages adopt.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

MODULE 9

THE LEVERS WERE IN ROME

Plurality or foreclosure — what a Somali could actually do against the apparatus, the single deposit of residue in fifty-two years and how it was won, why it eroded instead of accreting, and the discovery that the counterweights available to the colonised were Italian institutions which Fascism destroyed at home without anything happening in Somalia at all.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What counts as a lever

The question here is not whether an order was cruel. It is whether anything existed that the apex did not own — a court that could rule against it, a press it could not close, an association it had not chartered, a body it had to answer to — and whether a person at the bottom could reach any of it.

The pattern's account of where such things come from is unsentimental and it is the reason the question is worth asking at all. Liberties are not conceded to the powerless because the powerless demand them. They are won by factions *inside* the hierarchy, bargaining from strength, at moments when neither they nor the apex wants to break the arrangement, so that a concession is cheaper than a fight. The concession is written down. It outlives the quarrel that produced it. Over centuries the deposits accumulate into something a later generation experiences as rights — and the test of whether a liberty is real rather than rhetorical is whether **somebody with standing has an interest in defending the deposit**.

So the module has three jobs. Establish what a Somali could actually do. Find the factional fight, if there was one, and see what it deposited. And then ask why the deposit did not compound.

What a Somali had

A choice of judge, and it is the only genuine procedural liberty in the case.

Royal decree of 8 June 1911, no. 937, established separate sharia courts in Italian Somalia for Somali family and inheritance matters, building on the qadi appointments the Filonardi Company's regulation had made in 1895. In Italian Somalia — unlike British Somaliland, where the qadis' jurisdiction was confined to marriage, divorce, family disputes and inheritance — the sharia courts also settled civil and minor penal matters, and a Muslim plaintiff had a choice: he could bring his case before a secular judge or before a qadi. Below and alongside that ran the *capi indigeni*, native chiefs exercising jurisdiction over natives, and *xeer*, the customary law of the diya-paying groups, recognised as a legitimate option in matters of land, water, grazing and blood compensation.

That is a real thing and it should be entered at full weight. A litigant with a choice of forum has a species of power that a litigant with one court does not, and the Somali under Italian rule had more of it than the Somali under British rule to the north.

Now the limits, and they are the whole of the rest of the module.

The court system was divided by race, not by subject matter. On the Italian side sat the *conciliatori* for minor matters, the judge of the colony for civil and criminal cases, and a court of assize for the gravest offences — jurisdiction over Italians and over the small category of "assimilated" persons. On the native side sat the chiefs and the qadis. Cases in which only colonial subjects were interested were to be decided by native customary and Muslim law, with the governor empowered to modify native law where it conflicted with the fundamental principles of Italian legislation.

So the Somali's choice of judge operated **horizontally**. It governed disputes between Somalis. It gave him nothing whatever against a district commissioner who ordered him onto a plantation, a concessionaire whose guard stopped him leaving, a governor who declared his grazing land demanio, or a colonel who shelled his village. **A liberty that runs only sideways is not a counterweight**, and the general account should say so plainly, because a colonial administration that preserves native law can produce, in the archive, an impressive appearance of legal pluralism while leaving the vertical relation — subject against state — entirely unmediated.

What a Somali did not have

Set out the negative inventory, because it is short and total.

No standing against the administration. Nothing in the sources shows any avenue by which a Somali could sue the colonial government, challenge a governorial decree, or obtain a remedy against an official. The settlement established the one moment at which a Somali interest was invited to appear at all — the registration procedure of 1895, in which titles were to be declared at the Company's offices within twelve months and published for thirty days in the nearest village — and the result of failing to appear was extinction of the claim.

No representative institution of any kind. In fifty-two years Italy created no council, chamber, assembly or advisory body containing elected Somalis. The pattern's sharper test of a representative institution — not what powers it holds on paper but whether an opposition career is survivable and where its members go afterwards — cannot be run here, because there was no chamber and no career.

No press. The suppression module established it: the colony's newspapers appeared from 1929, in Italian, and nothing was published for Somalis in Somali, which had no written form. A press cannot be a counterweight to a state if it does not exist in the language of the governed.

No association. No Somali political organisation existed under Italian rule. Look for the ordinary connective tissue of civil society — guilds, clubs, reading societies — and nothing returns, and the formation module explained why: there was no formation, therefore no formed class, therefore nobody to associate.

No citizenship, and a hardening boundary. The formation module traced it. The in-and-out line was drawn at Italian citizenship; the route across it, in the law of 1933, was a perfectly Italian education; the schools stopped at the third year; and between 1936 and 1940 education was replaced by descent as the criterion, so that the route was closed rather than merely narrow. **The one boundary in this order that could have moved, moved the wrong way.**

The one substantial institution not owned by the apex was the one the formation module described — Islam, the *dugsi*, the *turuq*, the *jamaʿa* — and it was not a counterweight in the ordinary sense either, because it did not check the state; it simply held ground the state

had never entered. Its officers led the wars. When it acted politically it acted as an alternative order, not as a lever inside this one, and the state's answer was artillery.

The one deposit, and the fight that produced it

There is exactly one occasion in fifty-two years on which anything was won that improved the position of ordinary Somalis, and it happened precisely as such things do happen: not from below, but out of a fight between factions above.

The sequence has been given already. The Società Antischiavista d'Italia — a Catholic voluntary association founded in Rome in 1888 out of Lavigerie's crusade, with a subscription list, an episcopal blessing and the money to commission a traveller — sent Luigi Robecchi Bricchetti to the Benadir in 1903 and published his letters as *Dal Benadir* in 1904. A naval enquiry confirmed that slaves were still entering the ports under the Italian flag. The Company's own commission convicted it. A press campaign and a parliamentary debate followed; the Giolitti–Tittoni government denounced the 1898 convention; Italy bought the colony outright on 13 January 1905 and dissolved the Benadir Company on 14 February.

The residue of that fight is the ordinance of 2 March 1903 and the measures around it, and it should be stated at full value: the traffic prohibited in all its forms; every child born in the preceding thirteen years freed; the right of a slave to redeem himself at a price fixed by an Italian official rather than by his master; the guarantee that whatever a slave earned by trade or by his own labour was his absolute property.

That is not nothing. Real people were freed, and some of them went to the Gosha and farmed for themselves. It is a genuine deposit, produced by exactly the mechanism that produces such things: a faction inside the hierarchy, bargaining from strength, at a moment when the state found conceding cheaper than defending — indeed found conceding positively convenient, since it had wanted the colony under direct rule and now had a warrant.

Why it did not compound

And then it stopped, and nothing further was ever deposited, and much of what had been deposited was taken back by other means. The interesting question is why, because the answer is the module's contribution.

First: the deposit landed on people who could not hold it. The beneficiaries of 1903 were the least powerful population in Somalia — freed slaves, mostly of Bantu descent, without land, lineage standing, arms, literacy or any institution of their own beyond the maroon settlements on the Juba. The pattern's test of a real liberty is whether somebody with standing has an interest in defending the deposit, and here nobody did. The masters who had lost slaves had every interest in eroding it and went to war over it. The Italian faction that had won it was four thousand miles away and had moved on to other subjects. Within a decade the same population was being directed onto plantations by a Resident and watched by guards.

So the refinement the corpus should carry is this: residue accretes only where the beneficiary can defend the deposit. A concession won by a strong faction *on behalf of* a weak one is not a liberty; it is a favour, and it lasts as long as the patron's attention. The framework has tended to describe residue as accumulating by a kind of ratchet, because in the metropolitan cases the faction that won the concession was also the faction that held it. Somalia supplies the negative case and isolates the variable. **The ratchet is not in the writing-down. It is in the beneficiary.**

Second: the compulsion was reconstituted in a form the deposit did not cover. Modules 5 and 6 laid this out and it belongs here as the mechanism of erosion. The 1903 ordinance prohibited the buying, selling, pledging, gift, hire and exchange of persons. It said nothing about a residence contract, a district officer's direction, a vagrancy classification or a marriage made a condition of employment — because those things did not exist when it was drafted. A deposit written against one instrument does not bind a different one. **Liberties written as prohibitions of named practices erode by substitution; liberties written as grants of standing do not, because standing can be asserted against a practice nobody anticipated.** The Somali freedman got a prohibition. He never got standing.

Third, and decisively: the levers were in Rome, and Rome closed them.

Look again at what was actually used in 1903–05. A voluntary association with a subscription list. A published book. A press campaign. A parliamentary debate. A government that could be embarrassed into acting. A treaty standard signed before seventeen states. **Every single one of those instruments was Italian, and not one of them existed in Somalia.**

Between 1925 and 1926 the Fascist regime destroyed the domestic ones. The opposition press was suppressed, opposition parties dissolved, parliamentary contestation ended, and the associational life of the liberal state brought under the party. Nothing whatever happened in Somalia. No decree was issued in Mogadishu, no Somali institution was closed, no right was withdrawn from any colonial subject — because there were none to withdraw. And yet from that moment the Somali had no lever at all, because the only levers he had ever had were metropolitan, and they had been dismantled at the source.

The liberty of the colonised is a function of the plurality of the metropole, and it can be extinguished without a single act in the colony.

That proposition is testable and Italian Somalia is very nearly a controlled experiment for it, because the colony is held constant across a change of metropolitan regime. Under the liberal state, between 1889 and 1922, an abolitionist society could unseat a chartered company; the socialist and radical press could attack a major's punitive columns and compare them to Leopold's Congo; a governor and a soldier could fight out a colonial policy in public with two ministries behind them; a parliamentary question could be asked. Under the Fascist state, between 1922 and 1941, a colony was conquered twice over, two sultanates were abolished, a labour regime was built, a concentration camp was opened and a novel about Italian settlers was censored — and there is, in the sources, not one instance of any Italian institution successfully checking any of it.

The metropolitan public did not much care. The harder half is this: **when it did care, it needed institutions to care through, and those could be abolished.**

What happened the moment the Italians left

The last section of the module is the control, and it is brutally clean.

Italy administered Somalia from 1889 to 1941 and produced no Somali political organisation. The British Military Administration took over in February 1941. On 15 May 1943 — twenty-seven months later — thirteen men met in Mogadishu and founded the Somali Youth Club, which they could not yet call a party because the British would not have permitted one. Its founders drew on four of the major clan families and refused to disclose their own clan identities as a matter of policy. It was empowered by admitting the better-educated police and civil servants. It became the Somali Youth League on 1 April 1947, opened branches in British Somaliland, the Ogaden and the Northern

Frontier District, and set out its objectives: unification of the Somali territories, universal modern education, the safeguarding of Somali interests, opposition to the restoration of Italian rule — and **the development of the Somali language through a standard national orthography.**

Read that list against the preceding fifty-two years. The first political programme Somalis were ever able to publish demanded, as one of its five points, a written form for their own language, which the colonial power had declined to give them and which they would not obtain until 1972.

Alongside the SYL rose others: the Hizbia Digil-Mirifle for the inter-riverine clans, the Banadir Youth League, the Progressive League of the Majeerteen, and the pro-Italian Somalia Conference. When the Four Power Commission of Investigation came to Mogadishu in January 1948 to hear the inhabitants' wishes, it met all of them. The SYL was heard last, on 11 January at three in the afternoon, and its supporters rallied at Dhagaxtuur to show strength. The day ended in the worst civil violence in the colony's history: the figures given range from fourteen to twenty-four Somali dead and some fifty-one Italians, and among the Somali dead was Hawo Tako, whom Somali accounts remember as having died protecting people and some Italian accounts as having died trying to stop the killing of Italians.

Then plurality arrived by arithmetic. Under the trusteeship the SYL took a hundred and forty-one of a hundred and ninety-five seats in the municipal elections of 1954, formed a provisional government in 1956 under Abdullahi Issa, took eighty-three seats in the general election of 1959, and led the country to independence on 1 July 1960.

Two observations about that sequence, and both belong here rather than with the collapse.

The first is that **Somali political liberty appeared in the gap between two Italian administrations, under a third power that did not intend to grant it.** The British did not permit a party; they permitted a club, and the club became a party because there was now a vacancy in which one could grow. The permission was incidental. What mattered was that for the first time there was an administration with no stake in preventing it.

The second is grimmer. When Italy came back in 1950 as the United Nations trustee, it came back with the personnel of the old Ministry of Colonial Affairs — including,

notoriously, a former Fascist governor reappointed to the district he had governed before — and it came back under an obligation, supervised, with a date. **Somalia is therefore the one case in the series where the same colonial power administered the same territory under a plural international regime and under none, within a decade, and the difference in what the governed could do is the entire distance between a club that could not call itself a party and a prime minister.** The variable is not Italian intent, which was continuous and staffed by the same men. It is whether anybody was obliged to answer.

Reading Somali liberty against the pattern

The contribution: residue accretes only where the beneficiary can defend the deposit. It is a general rule that liberties are the residue of factional bargains struck above the heads of the people who eventually inherit them, and that they accumulate. Italian Somalia supplies the case in which the mechanism operated once, cleanly and genuinely, and produced nothing durable — and it isolates why. The Antischiavista won a real concession in 1903 and the concession landed on freed slaves, who had no land, no arms, no literacy, no institution and no standing, and who were therefore unable to hold it against a masters' war from one side and an administration's labour requirements from the other. **A concession won by a strong faction on behalf of a weak one is a favour with an expiry date.** The corpus should therefore stop reading the *writing-down* as the ratchet, and start reading the *recipient* as the ratchet: the operational question is not whether a liberty was granted but whether it was granted to somebody who could subsequently defend it in the granter's absence.

A corollary worth carrying: **liberties drafted as prohibitions of named practices erode by substitution; liberties drafted as grants of standing survive innovation.** The 1903 ordinance forbade a list of transactions in persons and the coercion migrated to residence within a generation. Had it instead conferred on the freedman a standing to be heard against any authority, the migration would have had to be fought rather than merely performed. This is the same finding the extraction reached about international compliance regimes, arriving from the other end.

The second contribution: the plurality available to the colonised is the metropole's plurality at one remove, and it can be destroyed at the source without a single colonial act. This is the sharpest thing in the module and Somalia is close to a

controlled test of it, because the colony is held constant across 1922. Everything a Somali interest was ever able to use — an association, a press, a parliamentary question, a treaty standard invoked by a domestic faction — was an Italian institution. Fascism abolished the first three at home in 1925–26 and neutralised the fourth by compliance, and from that point the colony was foreclosed without anything having been foreclosed *in* it. The plurality question asks *plural where, foreclosed where*, and expects the answer to vary between an order's core and its periphery. Somalia adds the causal direction: **for a colony, the periphery's plurality is a downstream function of the core's, so foreclosure at the core forecloses the periphery instantly and invisibly.** Where a colonial order becomes more repressive without a colonial cause, look at the metropole's own constitutional history in the preceding three years.

The confirmation: foreclosure by architecture, not by repression. Architectural foreclosure is more durable than repressive foreclosure because it generates careers instead of martyrs. Italian Somalia is the pure form, and it is more complete than the usual examples because there was not even a chamber whose critics could be absorbed. There was no press to censor, no party to ban, no assembly to prorogue, no citizenship to revoke and no orthography in which to write a petition. **An eye looking only for repression here would report a mild order.** The foreclosure was total precisely because nothing had ever been built that would have had to be dismantled.

And the answer to the question the module was set. Was there liberty, or only rhetoric? There was one procedural liberty, and it pointed sideways. There was one substantive deposit, and it was won by Italians for Somalis who could not keep it. There was no rhetoric at all — no charter, no proclamation of rights, no promise of eventual self-government to be measured against practice — which is itself a finding, because a coloniser who never promises liberty never has to be caught withholding it. The Somali case does not show a gap between professed rights and actual conduct. **It shows an order that had the sense not to profess.**

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. None new here. The 1895 regulation's articles on the qadis and on the registration of title, and the 1903 ordinance, are as quoted with the settlement and the robe from Rossetti's *Manuale* (1912).

Reported rather than quoted. Royal decree of 8 June 1911, no. 937, establishing separate sharia courts, is reported from a Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue study of Somali justice; its text has not been seen. **A discrepancy should be recorded: the settlement cited a royal decree of the same date, 8 June 1911, numbered 820, as establishing the agricultural concession regime.** Two decrees of one date is entirely possible and would be unremarkable, but one of the two numbers may be wrong and both come from secondary citations. The *Gazzetta Ufficiale* would settle it in one search and should. The description of the colonial court structure — *conciliatori*, judge of the colony, court of assize on the Italian side; *capi indigeni* and *cadi* on the native side — is drawn from an account of the Eritrean system, which was closely parallel but not identical, and is used here with that caveat. The provision that cases between colonial subjects be decided by customary and Muslim law, with the governor empowered to modify native law to accord with Italian fundamental principles, is from the Eritrean judicial ordinance of 20 June 1935 as reported in an Italian colonial-apologetic source; the Somali equivalent has not been located. The greater breadth of qadi jurisdiction in Italian as against British Somaliland, and the Muslim plaintiff's choice of forum, are from a US Library of Congress country study and have not been checked against a legal source; since the forum choice is the module's only positive finding about Somali procedural liberty, it should be verified.

The nationalist period. The founding of the Somali Youth Club at Mogadishu on 15 May 1943 by thirteen men, its reorganisation as the Somali Youth League on 1 April 1947, its five stated objectives including a standard national orthography, its policy of refusing to disclose founders' clan identities, and its electoral results (141 of 195 municipal seats in 1954, 83 seats in 1959, provisional government from 1956) are from reference sources and the standard literature. **The clan composition of the thirteen founders is given differently by different sources** — four Darod, five Reer Xamar, three Abgaal and one Isaaq in one account; four Darod, three Reer Xamar, three Rahanweyn and one Isaaq in another — and the discrepancy is recorded rather than resolved. The Four Power Commission's Mogadishu hearings of January 1948, the organisations it received, and the SYL's appearance on 11 January at three in the afternoon are from a Somali account of the trusteeship road; the casualty figures for that day are contested, ranging from fourteen to twenty-four Somali dead against about fifty-one Italian, and the death of Hawo Tako is remembered in incompatible ways in Somali and Italian accounts, both of which are recorded here without adjudication. That the trusteeship administration was staffed

largely from the old Ministry of Colonial Affairs, including the reappointment of a former Fascist governor to his old district, is reported in the recent literature on AFIS.

Paraphrased modern scholarship, credited and not quoted. Salvatore Mancuso's chapter on the interaction of customary, Islamic and colonial law in the Scovazzi volume is the obvious authority for the first half here and **has not been read**; it is in the open-access volume already used throughout and may well correct the account of jurisdiction given here. Antonio Morone on the end of Italian colonialism and the trusteeship administration; I. M. Lewis for the nationalist period.

A note on the landscape. The narrower formulation of the plantation question, set out with elite coordination and adopted in the closing pages, supersedes the stronger claim the opening landscape makes; nothing in the liberty argument depends on the difference.

MODULE 10

DISPERSED IN THE BUSH

Change and collapse — five weeks in 1941; the crack that opened the floor and the fact that it was not in Somalia; what became of the men who staffed the arrangement; and the coda in which the only defeated empire of the war was handed back the colony it had lost, because the constituency it served had never been in Africa.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Which crack, and where it was

The pattern's account of structural change admits four openings and no others. An elite **fractures** and one faction arms the people against the rest. An elite **exhausts** its floor in great-power war and must pay the survivors. An elite is **conquered** by a rival elite and remade at bayonet point. Or an elite **overbreeds**, seating fewer claimants than it forms, until its surplus turns revolutionary and leads the crowd as fuel. In all four the common man is present — as soldier, as crowd, as the weight a broken faction swings — and in none is he the author, because a durable order is an armed settlement and only the armed alter it.

Italian Somalia ended by conquest, the third crack, and the case is unusually clean because there is nothing else in it: no fracture that armed anybody, no exhaustion that forced a widening of the settlement, no surplus claimant class turning revolutionary, and — this is the load-bearing point — **no rising of the ruled at any moment in fifty-two years that had the slightest effect on the order's survival.** The Biimaal fought for twelve years and lost. The sultanates fought for two and lost. The Dervish war ran twenty years next door and ended by British air power. In February 1941 the colony changed hands in five weeks, and no Somali force was involved in changing it.

But the module's real finding is where the crack was, and it was not in Somalia at all.

Italy entered the Second World War on 10 June 1940 for reasons that had nothing whatever to do with the Horn of Africa. Through the winter of 1940–41 it was broken in the Western Desert and humiliated in Greece. Its East African empire, cut off from the

Mediterranean, was left with a large garrison, no resupply, and a viceroy whose morale had gone. The British, who had also broken the Italian army and air-force codes and were reading their opponents' orders as they were issued, attacked from Sudan on 19 January 1941 and from Kenya a fortnight later.

Somalia was lost in the Western Desert. The five weeks in February were the bookkeeping.

The five weeks

Operation Canvas opened on 24 January 1941. Lieutenant-General Alan Cunningham crossed from Garissa and Bura in Kenya on 10 and 11 February with the 11th and 12th African Divisions. Afmadu fell on 11 February; Kismayo, the first objective, on 13 February against negligible opposition. The main Italian position beyond the Juba at Jelib was attacked on both flanks and from the rear on 22 February; the Italians were routed, and thirty thousand men were killed, captured or **dispersed in the bush**. After that there was nothing between the British and the capital. On 25 February the motorised 23rd (Nigerian) Brigade, having covered two hundred and thirty-five miles up the coast in three days, occupied Mogadishu unopposed; the Italian forces had evacuated it. By 1 March Italian Somalia was substantially conquered. The same brigade then ran seventeen days up the Strada Imperiale — the road De Vecchi's successors had built toward Addis Ababa, completed the year before — reaching Jijiga on 17 March, having advanced close to a thousand miles in thirty-two days.

Thirty-eight years to lay the floor. Thirty-two days to run its length.

Two details of that sequence belong in the ledger. The Hafun salt works, the largest in the world and the colony's one profitable extraction, was destroyed. And on 29 March, at Dire Dawa in Ethiopia, Italian colonists appealed to advancing South African troops for protection against **deserters** who were committing atrocities — which is to say that the settlers of Italian East Africa, at the end, asked the invading army to protect them from their own.

What became of the men who staffed the arrangement

Elite coordination argued that Italian Somalia had no default in the ordinary sense but a payroll: that every position with a reason to defend the arrangement was funded from

Rome, that a payroll behaves identically to a default while the purse is open, and that the two separate on one test — **a real default fractures at a seam; a payroll evaporates uniformly.** February 1941 is that test, and the prediction holds without qualification.

There was no fracture. No faction of the colonial apparatus took a side, bid for the succession, formed a collaborationist party or a resistance, or attempted to convert its position into a claim on the new power. No Somali intermediary group used the moment to bargain. No sultanate was restored. No concessionaire raised a militia to hold his estate. The *dubats*, the *zaptié* and the colonial battalions did not mutiny, defect in formations, or fight to the end. At Jelib thirty thousand men were killed, captured **or dispersed in the bush**, and the third of those three verbs is the whole coordination argument in one clause.

That is what a payroll looks like when it stops. Men who hold land under an order defend it; men who hold offices their sons will inherit defend them; men who are paid go home. There was no seam in Italian Somalia because there was nothing sourced in Somalia to seam. Mogadishu was occupied unopposed by a brigade that had been driving for three days.

And one symmetry worth recording, since it has run through the whole case from the beginning. The floor that laid the colony was African: Eritrean companies and Arabian askari under Italian officers took the lower Shebelle in 1908; dubats and Eritrean battalions broke the sultanates in 1925–27. The force that destroyed it was also African: East African, Nigerian, Sudanese, Ghanaian, South African and Indian troops under British officers. **Italian Somalia was created and extinguished by African soldiers commanded by Europeans, and in neither operation did the men doing the fighting have any stake in the outcome beyond their pay.**

The metabolic test

The framework requires a specific question at collapse: how much genuine, life-sustaining coordination was the order performing, since the mass death a collapse collects is proportional to that — catastrophic where the order *was* the subsistence metabolism, near-bloodless where it was only governance and commerce.

The honest answer for Somalia, on the evidence available, is **near-bloodless, with one place still unexamined.**

Pastoral Somalia, which was most of the country and most of the population, had never depended on the Italian order for anything. Its herds, wells, seasonal movements and *xeer* were untouched by the change of flag, as they had been largely untouched by the flag itself. The coastal towns lost a customs administration and gained another. The concessions lost their market — the banana monopoly's ships were requisitioned as auxiliary cruisers and mostly sunk, and the crop had nowhere to go — but a banana plantation ceasing to export is a commercial event, not a famine.

The one district where the question is real is the riverine south, and it is real because of the extraction. The recent scholarship holds that Italian development planning disrupted local foodstuff production and made the colony dependent on imported food. If that dependence was substantial in the lower Shebelle and Juba in 1941, when shipping ceased and the estates stopped, the consequences for the concession labour force and the displaced cultivators could have been serious. **No evidence of famine in Somalia in 1941–43 has been found, and the search has not been pursued to the bottom**, and this is carried as an open question for the grim accounting rather than answered here.

The coda: the metropole comes back

Now the anomaly, which is genuine and which the series has no other instance of.

The British Military Administration held Somalia from February 1941. Italy renounced its colonies by the peace treaty of 10 February 1947. The Council of Foreign Ministers, unable to agree, appointed a Four Power Commission of Investigation, which came to Mogadishu in January 1948 to hear the inhabitants. On 21 November 1949 the United Nations General Assembly resolved that Italian Somaliland should become a trust territory **under Italian administration**, for ten years, with a fixed terminal date. The Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia began on 1 April 1950 and ended on 1 July 1960 with Somali independence.

The only defeated empire of the Second World War was given back a colony it had lost by conquest, by the organisation that had defeated it, nine years later.

Read that against the extraction and it is less strange than it looks. The extraction of Italian Somalia never came out of Somalia; it came out of the Italian budget and, after 1935, the Italian shopping basket, and it went to a class of concessionaires, a shipping interest and a monopoly board whose entire constituency was in Italy. **An arrangement**

whose beneficiaries are metropolitan does not lose its constituency when the territory is lost. The banana tariff survived the empire; the Azienda Monopolio Banane was reconstituted in 1950 and ran until it collapsed in a corruption scandal in Rome in 1964. There was, in short, a live Italian interest in the return, and a defeated republic with a domestic politics that needed something to have won.

Two further observations, both of which belong here rather than with the closing convergence.

The trusteeship administration was staffed largely from the personnel of the old Ministry of Colonial Affairs, including — notoriously — a former Fascist governor reappointed to the district he had administered before, and it was widely regarded in Somalia as a refuge for men avoiding the post-war reckoning at home. The men were the same. **What was different was that the arrangement now had a supervisor, a terminal date and an obligation to produce a state** — and the liberty module established what that difference produced: a club that could not call itself a party in 1943 became a party in 1947, took a hundred and forty-one of a hundred and ninety-five municipal seats in 1954, formed a provisional government in 1956, and took the country to independence in 1960.

So the transfer of power in Somalia, when it finally came, came by none of the pattern's four cracks. It came by a timetable, imposed on a defeated metropole by an international organisation, and executed by the metropole's own colonial officials. That is not a fifth crack — nothing broke — and the collection should be careful not to inflate it into one. It is what happens after the third crack when the conquering elite declines to keep the prize and cannot agree what to do with it.

The people's part, stated honestly

The pattern's discipline requires that popular pressure be granted its real causal weight while the line between proximate agent and author is held. Somalia allows the line to be drawn with unusual precision, because the two halves fall on opposite sides of 1941.

Before 1941 the Somali contribution to change was nil. Twelve years of Biimaal war, two of sultanate war, a generation of raiding from Ethiopian exile: the order was neither modified nor deflected by any of it. It changed the price — the cost column counted it, in columns, bombardments and blockade — and price is a real form of power. It was not authorship, and the arrangement ended when a British brigade drove up the coast.

After 1941 the Somali contribution was substantial and it worked through exactly the channel the general pattern predicts. The SYL did not seize anything; it made itself a fact that a commission of enquiry, a General Assembly and an administering power all had to take account of. The condition of a fixed terminal date for the trusteeship was, on the record, pressed by the Somali political organisations themselves. Eleven January 1948, when the SYL rallied at Dhagaxtuur to show strength before the Four Power Commission and the day ended with somewhere between fourteen and twenty-four Somali dead and about fifty-one Italians, is the clearest instance in the case of the credible-threat mechanism: **a demonstration of what holding the territory would cost, delivered to the people deciding whether to hold it.**

The distinction between the two periods is not that Somalis became more determined. It is that after 1941 there existed, for the first time, an audience obliged to answer them.

Reading the Somali collapse against the pattern

The contribution: a colonial order's floor is not where the colony is, so date the crack in the metropole. Elite Chaos's cases are mostly of orders that broke where they stood — a French monarchy in France, a Russian autocracy in Russia. A colony is the periphery of a floor whose load-bearing structure is somewhere else, and it therefore cracks at events with no local cause whatsoever. Italy lost Somalia because it lost Sidi Barrani and Greece. Nothing in Somalia in 1940 was different from Somalia in 1938; the difference was in Cyrenaica. **The operational instruction: when dating a colonial collapse, do not date the colonial event. Find the metropolitan or great-power event that repriced the holding, and expect the colonial sequence to be short, one-sided and uninformative** — five weeks, in this case, with the capital taken unopposed. A study that reads the colonial campaign as the collapse will mistake the receipt for the transaction.

This also completes the floor of force from the other end. The founding found that Adwa, a defeat fifteen hundred miles away in a different colony, had done more than any Somali action to determine the shape of the Somali floor. The collapse finds the same structure at the close: **the colony's founding and its ending were both decided on other people's battlefields.** In between, everything the Somalis did changed the price and nothing changed the outcome, which is the thesis stated in its harshest available form, and this case is not the one to soften it.

The confirmation, and it is the sharpest test the coordination argument could have asked for. The payroll thesis predicted that an order with no locally sourced beneficiaries would not fracture but evaporate, uniformly and at once. February 1941 confirms it exactly: no faction, no defection in formation, no bid for the succession, no restoration attempted, no estate defended — thirty thousand men at Jelib killed, captured or dispersed in the bush, and a capital occupied without a shot by a brigade that had been driving for three days. **"Did the apparatus fracture, or did it disperse?" is a diagnostic that can be applied after the fact to settle whether an order had a default or a payroll**, since the two are indistinguishable until the moment they are not.

And the coda, offered as an addition rather than a correction. Conquest is one of the ways a floor cracks, and it is usually assumed that the conquering elite installs a new order. Somalia shows a variant worth naming: **the conqueror who takes a colony and does not want it.** Britain held Somalia for nine years without deciding anything, the powers could not agree, and the territory was ultimately returned to the defeated metropole under supervision, with a date, because there was an Italian constituency that wanted it and no British one that did. What produced Somali independence in 1960 was therefore not a crack at all but an international administrative timetable — and the reason such a thing was available in 1949 and not in 1919 belongs to the closing convergence. What belongs here is the mechanism: **where the loser of a war retains a domestic interest in a lost colony and the winner has none, expect the colony to go back.**

A note on sources.

Exactly quoted primary material. None. This module rests almost entirely on military and diplomatic narrative from secondary sources.

The campaign. Operation Canvas from 24 January 1941; Cunningham's crossing from Garissa and Bura on 10–11 February with the 11th and 12th African Divisions; Afmadu on 11 February; Kismayo on 13 February; the action at Jelib on 22 February with thirty thousand Italian troops killed, captured or dispersed; the unopposed occupation of Mogadishu on 25 February by the motorised 23rd (Nigerian) Brigade after a two-hundred-and-thirty-five-mile advance in three days; the seventeen-day run to Jijiga by 17 March and nearly a thousand miles in thirty-two days; the appeal of Italian colonists at Dire Dawa on 29 March for protection against deserters — all from the standard encyclopedic accounts of the East African campaign, which derive from the British official

history. **The figure of thirty thousand at Jelib is a British operational estimate covering killed, captured and dispersed together**, and the three categories are not separable in the sources consulted; it should not be read as a casualty figure. Cunningham's date of crossing is given variously as 10 and 11 February.

The trusteeship sequence. The peace treaty of 10 February 1947; the Four Power Commission's visit to Mogadishu in January 1948; the General Assembly resolution of 21 November 1949 placing the territory under Italian trusteeship for ten years; the beginning of AFIS on 1 April 1950 and independence on 1 July 1960 — from reference sources. The staffing of the trusteeship administration from the old Ministry of Colonial Affairs, including the reappointment of a former Fascist governor, and the perception of the territory as a refuge for men avoiding post-war reckoning, are reported in the recent literature on AFIS and were noted with the liberty argument. **The political history of the 1949 decision — why the powers settled on returning the territory to Italy, and what part Italian domestic politics and Cold War alignments played — has not been researched here**, and the account given of an Italian constituency wanting the return is an inference from the extraction's finding about where the beneficiaries sat. It is plausible and it is not established, and the closing convergence should either substantiate it or drop it.

The metabolic question. Left open. The claim that Italian development planning disrupted local food production and made the colony dependent on imports is Annalisa Urbano's. Whether that dependence produced hunger in the riverine districts when the shipping stopped in 1941 has not been investigated; **no evidence of famine has been found and none has been sought to the bottom**, and the grim accounting must not present the collapse as bloodless without doing that search.

Paraphrased modern scholarship. I. M. Lewis for the nationalist period and the transition; Antonio Morone on the end of Italian colonialism and the trusteeship. The framework material is from *Elite Chaos* in the series.

Two outstanding items carried forward. The narrower formulation of the plantation question set out with elite coordination supersedes the opening landscape's stronger claim. And the load-bearing budget figures in the extraction remain sourced to a single secondary article.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.

MODULE 11

STARVATION AND SCURVY

The grim accounting — the one mass death of Somalis that anybody wrote down, the columns of violence beside it, who held the pen; the metabolic test applied at the collapse and returning nothing; the note that fell due half a century later on exactly the people the order had dispossessed; and the one Italian creation that outlived the Italians and became simply the way the world is.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Twelve hundred

Between April 1904 and January 1905 the Biimaal besieged the port of Merca. The town held because it could be supplied from the sea and the besiegers could not stop a ship. The siege was broken. The reference literature records that about twelve hundred people died in the course of it, and records the cause: **starvation and scurvy.**

Begin the accounting there, for three reasons.

It is very nearly the only occasion in fifty-two years on which anyone set down a number for Somali dead. It was not produced by a battle: it was produced by a blockade, which is to say by the interruption of a food system, which is the mechanism to be tested at the end. And it was written by Italians, because there was no other pen in the country — a fact that governs every figure below and has to be stated before, not after, the numbers.

The sword's column

Set out what is dated and what is not, in order.

April 1890, Warsheikh. A landing party from the *Volta* is attacked; Commander Zavagli and the engineer Bertorello are killed. The ship fires fifty-six shells, by the commander's report, or sixty, by the President of the Council's statement to the Chamber; the village is burnt. **Somali dead: not recorded.**

2 October 1893, Merca. Lieutenant Maurizio Talmone assassinated. Reprisals not detailed in the sources consulted.

25–26 November 1896, Lafoole. Consul Antonio Cecchi and fourteen other Italians killed, together with much of an escort of some seventy askari. **Somali dead: not recorded.**

February–April 1897, the Sorrentino expedition. Nimow bombarded from the sea — Cassanelli's identification of the first Italian action against a Somali civilian population; the villages of Gellai, Res and Lafoole destroyed; seventy people seized at Gesira; one engagement in which fifty Somalis were killed against one askari. Otherwise **not recorded.**

December 1903, Durbo. A village in the Majeerteen bombarded after a two-hour ultimatum over a flag; Lieutenant Grabau killed directing the fire. **Somali dead: not recorded.**

April 1904 – January 1905, Merca. About twelve hundred dead of starvation and scurvy.

February–March 1907. Five hundred Guards of the Benadir burn Biimaal, Intera and other villages; engagements at Dongab, Danane, Gilib — where Biimaal losses are put at about four hundred — and Mellet.

July–September 1908, the Di Giorgio columns. Merca relieved; a square of eleven hundred men with nine hundred and fifty rifles and four mountain guns; about a hundred dead at Mererè against two askari wounded; the village burnt, imperfectly, and burnt again the next day after the civilians had been removed; Afgooye occupied. The Agenzia Stefani communiqué reported the population's reception as festive and cordial.

1925–27, the campaign of the sultanates. Bender Bela taken, lost and destroyed; Bargal under naval bombardment for something like twenty-two consecutive hours; a blockade of the whole Horn; El Bot. Italian figures: sixteen thousand five hundred firearms recovered, five hundred and fifty dead on the Italian side and one thousand two hundred and thirty-six Somali. The first of those numbers is a count of objects and is probably sound. The second is overwhelmingly African askari in Italian service. **The third is the conqueror's own arithmetic for two years of naval bombardment,**

blockade and village destruction across a region the size of England, and should be read as a floor and not an estimate.

After 1936, Danane. A concentration camp on the coast south-west of Mogadishu, on the ground where Di Giorgio had made his headquarters in 1908, holding a recorded population of about six thousand, mostly Ethiopians who had resisted Italian rule; many accounts report that about half died of malnutrition, malaria and other disease. Some three thousand dead, on that reading, in a camp in Somalia, of people who were not Somali.

February 1941, Jelib. Thirty thousand men of the Italian colonial forces killed, captured or dispersed — a British operational estimate in which the three categories are not separable. The great majority were African.

11 January 1948, Mogadishu. Between fourteen and twenty-four Somalis and about fifty-one Italians killed on the day the Somali Youth League appeared before the Four Power Commission. This is the first entry in the whole column for which a Somali count exists in Somali memory.

And then the entries with no numbers at all, which are the larger part: the Biimaal war's dead across twelve years; the villages burnt between 1897 and 1908; the dead of the forced-labour recruitment; the mortality of the concession labour force; the people displaced when the Genale barrage took the river above them.

Who held the pen

The manual's instruction is to note who wrote every number. In this case the answer is uniform and it is worth stating as a finding rather than a caveat.

Every figure above except the last was produced by an Italian: a naval commander's report, a minister's answer to the Chamber, a governor's despatch, a regimental history, a British operational summary. Somalia had no press until 1929 and none in Somali ever; no written form of the Somali language until 1972; no census; no Somali official of a rank that generated records; no court in which a Somali could bring an action against the administration and thereby create a document. **The instrument that would have counted Somali dead was never built, and the formation module established that its absence was policy.**

So the column of Somali dead here is not a low number. It is an unbuilt instrument, and the difference matters, because an eye that mines the paper will read the silence as absence. Italian Somalia is the purest instance of that available: **an order that withheld literacy from its subjects thereby withheld the possibility of ever being counted by them, and the resulting archive is not a record of a mild conquest but the shadow cast by a formation policy.**

The metabolic test at the collapse

Now the test the accounting requires, and the answer, and then the complication.

The proposition is that mass death at a collapse is proportional to how much genuine life-sustaining coordination the order was performing — catastrophic where the order *was* the subsistence metabolism, near-bloodless where it was only governance and commerce. Applied to February 1941 the test returns, on the evidence that could be assembled, **negative**.

Pastoral Somalia, which was most of the country and most of the people, had never eaten off the Italian order. Herds, wells, seasonal movement and the *diya* system were untouched by the change of flag as they had been largely untouched by the flag. The coastal towns exchanged one customs administration for another. The concessions lost their market — the banana monopoly's refrigerated ships were requisitioned as auxiliary cruisers and mostly sunk — but a plantation ceasing to export is a commercial event.

The place to look was the riverine south, because the extraction recorded the scholarship's finding that Italian development planning disrupted local foodstuff production and made the colony dependent on imported food. The collapse left the question open and it has to be answered here, honestly and negatively: **the search turned up no evidence of famine in Italian Somalia in 1941–43, and no evidence of famine at any point under Italian rule other than the Merca siege.** The droughts and epidemics documented for the Somali region in the 1940s — 1943, 1947–49 — belong to the literature on *British* Somaliland to the north-west and are a different territory and a different economy. The inter-riverine south is described in the later famine literature as a region whose people were **not accustomed to famine**, which is itself evidence about the period before.

I record that as a finding rather than as a reassurance. It means the pattern's metabolic-death instrument, applied at the moment of collapse, scores Italian Somalia as an order whose coordination was governance and commerce rather than subsistence — and therefore as one whose ending cost little.

That score is wrong, and the reason it is wrong is the module's contribution.

The note that fell due later

The metabolic proposition is that intensive agriculture and coordination lift a population above the land's unaided carrying capacity, so that a disruption calls the note and the debt is paid in famine and disease. The instrument tests for that at the point of disruption. But **a colonial reorganisation can create the vulnerability and not the dependence** — can leave the population no higher above carrying capacity than it found it, while destroying the arrangements that had allowed that population to survive a bad year, and while installing a legal and social structure that will convert the next political shock into a catastrophe.

Consider what fifty-two years left standing in the Shebelle and Juba valleys.

A legal doctrine, dating from 1895, that all uncultivated land without an ascertained owner belonged to the state. A population of riverine cultivators — Rahanweyn and Digil, the Shebelle and Gabwing peoples, the Bantu of Gosha descent — who under that doctrine held no registrable title to the ground they farmed, whose lineage authority over land allocation had been broken, whose labour had been compelled by administrative direction for a generation, and who stood outside the clan-genealogical order in which political standing in Somalia was reckoned. The best-watered land in the country under concession title. A river re-engineered above them. A political economy in which the country's principal export came from that land and its profits went to a monopoly.

The Italians left in 1941 and none of that left with them. The doctrine survived into the independent state; the inter-riverine peoples remained without standing and without title; the plantation districts remained the country's most valuable ground; and when the state collapsed in 1991 the famine of 1991–92, which killed somewhere between two and three hundred thousand people, fell **precisely on the inter-riverine breadbasket and precisely on those populations** — the Rahanweyn and Digil, the Bantu, the riverine

minorities — while the pastoral clans that had been outside the colonial land settlement suffered far less.

I want to be exact about what is and is not being claimed, because the causal chain is fifty years long and runs through a civil war, a dictatorship, a land nationalisation, a drought and a set of militias, and the sole responsibility for the killing lies with the men who did it.

What is claimed is narrower and it holds. **The colonial order did not call the metabolic note; it wrote one and left it in the drawer.** It converted a productive region with its own land law and its own defences into a region of high value, no title, and a population without political standing — which is a description of a vulnerability, and the vulnerability was cashed by somebody else.

And the consequence is methodological. **The metabolic-death test, as usually stated, measures at the moment of collapse and will therefore return zero for any order whose damage was deferred.** The refinement: run the test twice. Once at the collapse, for the coordination that was destroyed; and once at the next major shock the successor order meets, for the vulnerabilities the collapsed order installed and did not remove. **Where an order's principal harm was to the legal and social standing of a specific population rather than to the food supply of the whole, expect the bill to arrive under a successor regime and be attributed to it.**

The accounting in omissions

The manual instructs that where an order was cheap, the accounting should be conducted in omissions, because casualty counts and extraction tonnages are built to register commissions and will return a null where the harm is a school unbuilt. Italian Somalia is not a cheap order in the Northern Nigerian sense — it fought for thirty-eight years — but its omissions are extraordinary and they are the larger half of the bill.

No writing. Somali had no official script until 1972, eleven years after independence. Shaykh Uways al-Barawi was devising one at Brava in the 1890s so that religious verse could be sung in it. Fifty-two years of colonial administration did not produce one and did not want one, and the first political programme Somalis were ever able to publish, in 1943, had to list an orthography among its five demands.

No schooling. A ceiling at the third elementary year, on the stated ground that three years sufficed for the manual work the native labour force was destined for. Segregated classrooms from 1928. No secondary education, no ladder, no professional class.

No Somali in the state. No citizenship, ever, for anyone, including men who had served thirty years in the colonial army. No representative body. No Somali administrator of consequence. When independence came in 1960 the country had, in consequence, a state apparatus staffed at its upper levels by people it had spent seventy years being prevented from producing.

No revenue base. The colony never paid for itself in fifty-two years. The state that inherited it inherited an administration built around a metropolitan subsidy and an export monopoly that were both about to disappear.

And the borders. Between 1891 and 1925 the Somali-speaking territories were divided among five jurisdictions — Italian Somalia, British Somaliland, French Somaliland, Ethiopian Ogaden and the Kenyan Northern Frontier District — by agreements among Europeans and an Ethiopian emperor, over Somali heads and for non-Somali reasons. The Italians did not do this alone and did not do most of it. But the colony they built defined one of the five pieces, and the state that succeeded it inherited both the piece and the grievance, and the first political party's first objective in 1943 was the unification of the whole. That is a cost, it is structural, and it is not measurable in bodies.

The credit column, at full weight

The discipline requires that the genuine coordination be counted in the same breath and at equal weight, and this order performed some.

The traffic in persons was ended. Not perfectly, not at once, and not without a war fought by the people whose economy it broke — but the Benadir slave trade was suppressed, thirteen years of children were freed by the ordinance of 1903, slaves were permitted to redeem themselves at a fixed price and to keep their earnings, and men and women were freed and recorded as freed. That is real and it happened to real people and no analysis of what followed cancels it.

Water and roads. The SAIS diversion dam of 1923 and its canals; the Genale barrage, begun October 1924 and completed 27 October 1926; seven hundred and sixty kilometres of canal by 1926; the Mogadishu–Villabruzzi railway of a hundred and

fourteen kilometres, completed 1928; the Strada Imperiale toward Addis Ababa, nearly finished by 1941; the port works at Mogadishu and Merca. These were the first modern irrigation and transport works in the Horn and they were substantial.

Hafun. The largest salt works in the world at its date, with two power stations, twenty-four kilometres of ropeway and a town for five thousand people, exporting over three hundred thousand tonnes a year — destroyed in 1941 and never rebuilt.

A city. Mogadishu grew from the town of some thirty thousand the Italians found into an administrative capital with a port, a hospital, a cathedral, a museum, schools, a power station and a plan.

And, at the end, an independent state delivered on time. Italy returned in 1950 under a United Nations trusteeship with a fixed terminal date, staffed largely by its own former colonial officials, and on 1 July 1960 Somalia became independent on the day the mandate expired. Alone among the defeated empires, Italy went back and finished, and the finishing was real.

What naturalised

One proposition is worth answering directly: that if enough time passes and things settle, people forget that violence made the arrangement.

In Somalia the Italian order did not have time. Fifty-two years is not enough for formation to compound, and the formation module established that Italy never attempted it anyway, so nothing about Italian rule became the furniture of anyone's reality. Somalis did not forget who had shelled Nimow or burnt Mererè or taken Bargal, and they did not become Italians even in the attenuated sense in which Gauls became Roman. When the flag went in 1941 the belief went with it, because there had never been any.

But something did naturalise, and it is not what anyone would have predicted. **What survived was the land law.**

The declaration of 1895 — that all uncultivated land without an ascertained owner belongs to the state — was a sentence written by a trading company with sixty-three armed men, to secure customs receipts, over ground it did not control. It outlived the company, the liberal state, the Fascist state, the empire, the British administration, the

trusteeship and the Republic. By the time the independent Somali state was legislating on land, the proposition that untitled ground was the state's had ceased to be an Italian instrument and had become simply how land worked — and the people it fell on were the same riverine cultivators it had fallen on in 1895, now dispossessed by their own government using a doctrine nobody remembered was foreign.

That is the answer to the module's opening question, and it is more disquieting than the usual form of it. **The thing that became the furniture of reality in Somalia was not the conqueror's story about himself, which nobody ever believed. It was one clause of his property law, which nobody ever argued about.**

Reading the Somali accounting against the pattern

The contribution: run the metabolic test twice. The pattern's instrument measures mass death at the point of collapse and reads it as proportional to the coordination destroyed. That is right as far as it goes and it returns a near-zero for Italian Somalia in 1941. But an order can leave a population no more dependent than it found it while stripping that population of title, standing and the arrangements by which it used to survive a bad year — and the resulting bill falls not when the order collapses but at the next shock the successor meets. **The refinement is to test at the collapse for destroyed coordination and at the successor's first major crisis for installed vulnerability**, and to expect the second to be attributed entirely to the successor, because by then the instrument that created it is domestic law. Somalia in 1991–92 is the case: two to three hundred thousand dead, concentrated on exactly the inter-riverine populations that the colonial settlement had dispossessed of title and the colonial genealogy of standing had placed outside politics.

The second contribution: an unbuilt counting instrument is itself an entry in the accounting. Every figure here except one was written by an Italian, and the reason is that the order withheld literacy, script, press, census participation and legal standing from its subjects as a matter of policy — which is the formation finding arriving in the ledger. **The absence of subject-generated numbers is therefore not a limitation on the accounting but a line in it**, quantified by what it took to produce: a third-grade ceiling, an unwritten language, no newspaper, no court with standing. An order that cannot be counted by the people it governs has performed a harm that is invisible to every instrument the historian owns, and the invisibility is the harm's own product.

The confirmation, and the refusal. The conqueror's syllogism is available here in its strongest form and should be stated before it is refused: that Italy ended a slave trade, built the Horn's first irrigation, gave Somalia a port, a capital, a road system and the shape of a state, and alone among defeated empires returned under supervision to deliver its independence on the appointed day. Every clause of that is true. Four refusals apply, and each does its work. **The survival argument**: that the order lasted and produced these things does not establish that it was justified, since durability is a fact about incentives. **The rigged comparison**: setting Italian Somalia against Belgian Congo is not a comparison between conquest and self-rule, and the foreclosed alternative — an inter-riverine agricultural economy and a pastoral order that had run for centuries without a garrison — is in the record and should be named. **Credit for parsimony**: the mildness Italy is credited with in the interior for the first two decades was a fact about its bankruptcy, not its character, and the cost column showed the demands rising exactly as the capacity rose. And **the charge of cynicism, refused**: the abolitionists were sincere, the missionary teachers who wrote respectful references to Islam into their syllabuses were sincere, the engineers who built the barrage were proud of it, and none of that is a defence, and none of it makes them liars either.

A note on sources.

Numbers, and their provenance. Every casualty figure here is carried forward from the founding, the cost column, the extraction, the suppression and the collapse with the provenance stated there, and it is not restated in full. The load-bearing cautions: the twelve hundred dead at Merca is an estimate in the reference literature resting on no count; the 550 and 1,236 for the campaign of the sultanates are Italian colonial figures reproduced on commemorative sites and the second should be read as a floor; the Danane population of about six thousand with roughly half dying is from Ebner at second hand; the thirty thousand at Jelib is a British operational estimate combining killed, captured and dispersed; the 1948 casualties are given as ranges because Somali and Italian accounts differ. **No figure here is independently verified and several rest on a single secondary citation.**

Population figures are not given, because there is no defensible series. Contemporary Italian chronologies put the possession Mercatelli took over in 1905 at about half a million people; the Somalia Governorate of 1936 is given at about 1,150,000

including the annexed Ogaden. These are administrative estimates of a country nobody surveyed or counted, they cover different territories, and no demographic conclusion is drawn from them here.

The metabolic finding. The negative result for 1941–43 rests on a search that found no evidence of famine in Italian Somalia, not on any source asserting that none occurred. The droughts and epidemics documented by Jama Mohamed for 1943 and 1947–49 concern British Somaliland. The characterisation of the inter-riverine south as a region not accustomed to famine before the 1990s is from the displacement literature and is not a demographic finding. **The deferred-liability argument is this account's own, not any source's**, though it draws on the standard account of the 1991–92 famine's concentration on the inter-riverine and Bantu populations and on the observation, made in that literature, that land in those districts had been taken by the Italian administration for banana plantations. **The causal chain runs fifty years through a civil war, and the claim is deliberately confined to the installation of a vulnerability rather than the causation of a famine**; anyone who thinks even that is too much should be able to see exactly where the claim stops.

The survival of the land doctrine. That the 1895 public-domain declaration underlies the land law of the independent state is stated here on the strength of Marco Guadagni's work on Somali land law before and after independence — he wrote both the 1978 article on the colonial origins of the public domain used throughout and a later treatment of Somali agrarian law — and on the displacement literature's account of dispossession in the riverine districts. **Neither the later Guadagni nor any Somali land statute has been read**, and this is the single most important unverified claim in the accounting. It should be checked before the closing pages, where it will otherwise carry a great deal of weight.

Outstanding items, restated. The narrower formulation of the plantation question set out with elite coordination supersedes the opening landscape's stronger claim. The budget figures in the extraction rest on one secondary article. Cassanelli's chapter on the ending of slavery in Italian Somalia, Podestà on colonial economics, Urbano's article in full, Mancuso on colonial law and Bufalini on reparation all remain unread, and four of the five are accessible.

MODULE 12

ON THE APPOINTED DAY

Convergence and divergence — what Italian Somalia shares with the other conquests in the series and where it genuinely differs; what it returns to the pattern and what it only confirms; and the strongest case that can be made for the whole enterprise, stated at full strength and with the arithmetic set beside it.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What this case is for

Two things this case does that the others cannot do as cleanly.

The first is that it stands beside the standing national account — *italiani, brava gente*, the empire that was late, poor, small, comparatively humane, and redeemed at the end by a trusteeship no other defeated power was granted. That account is not a fabrication. Every element of it is true of something. Set beside it is the documentary record of what the smallness and the poverty actually consisted of, in the order in which it happened.

The second is that it shows, more plainly than a rich empire can, **what a conqueror does when he cannot afford to conquer.** Britain and France in Africa were rich enough that their instruments look like choices. Italy in Somalia was not, and the poverty strips the machinery down to its load-bearing parts. A power that cannot buy a floor buys a receipt; a power that cannot form a subject population does not form it and calls the result respect for custom; a power that cannot police an interior declares it public domain and waits twenty-five years. The mechanisms are the same as the rich empires'. They are simply visible, because there was no money to cover them.

What it shares

With Eritrea, most and most directly. Same ministry, often the same officers, the same rented African floor, the same withheld formation, the same collapse from outside in the same weeks of 1941, and the same singular coda of a metropole returning under United

Nations mandate. And Somalia completes Eritrea's extraction thesis from the receiving end, literally: four Eritrean companies took the lower Shebelle for Di Giorgio in 1908, and Eritrean battalions were shipped across for the campaign of the sultanates in 1925. **The men one Horn colony grew were spent taking the next one over, and ten years later Somalia made the same export to Ethiopia.**

With British Kenya, on the settlement. Where a conquered order is durable and self-running but contains no seat a stranger can occupy, the conqueror must forge an apex; a forged apex carries no warrant; and its running cost is the pass, the emergency and the camp — a throne you build yourself is a throne nobody kneels to, and a settlement that buys nobody is a wall, and walls have to be manned. Somalia is a second instance and it is cleaner than Kenya, because Italy did not even have settlers to justify the wall.

With British Northern Nigeria and Buganda, by inversion. Those are the cases of the assumed chair and the recognised estate: a caliphal office a stranger could sit down in, a thousand chiefs given eight square miles each. Somalia is what happens when neither is available, and the result holds all the way down to the ratio of officials to subjects running the wrong way.

With Southern Rhodesia, on the founding. A chartered joint-stock company holding quasi-sovereign powers, conquering and administering on a concession, with the metropolitan state standing behind it and disclaiming the cost.

With British Northern Nigeria again, on the robe. England spent twenty million pounds ending slavery, acquired the robe, and then discovered what the robe licensed. Italy signed the Brussels Act because it was the only coin the counter would take, and then discovered that the same instrument specified colonial administration as the remedy, the initiation of Africans into agricultural labour as a benefit, and permanent centres of cultivation as an objective. **Two empires, two decades apart, entering by the same door and finding the same rooms behind it.**

And with the Caribbean cases, on the crop — but here the precision rule applies and the differences have to be named before the similarity is allowed to stand.

What it does not share, named precisely

The natural expectation was that Somalia would sit beside Saint-Domingue and Jamaica: a coerced-labour plantation colony producing an export crop for the metropole. It does

not, and the divergences are real and must not be flattened to protect the family resemblance.

The labour was not chattel and was not imported. Saint-Domingue's workforce was bought, shipped across an ocean, owned, and replaced by further purchase as it died. Somalia's was local, legally free from 1903, nominally waged, contractually engaged, and held by administrative direction, a residence contract and a vagrancy classification. The cost column named the move — the coercion relocated from the law of persons to the law of place — and the relocation is not a euphemism for the same thing. It produced a different regime with different mortality, different resistance and, decisively, a different visibility: a slave register is evidence of slavery, and a colonate contract is evidence of a contract.

The market was closed, not open. Caribbean sugar competed. Somali bananas could not, which is precisely why the Regia Azienda Monopolio Banane was created in December 1935 to shut the Italian market against everyone else. **A plantation that requires a legal monopoly to sell its crop is not the same economic object as one that undercuts the world.**

The land taken was not put to use. Roughly forty-five to fifty thousand hectares were granted in concession; the peak area under the flagship crop was four thousand five hundred. A Caribbean plantation was land in production. A Somali concession was mostly a claim on land.

And the whole enterprise lost money for fifty years. Saint-Domingue made France rich. Somalia cost Italy over a hundred million lire a year in the mid-1920s and never covered its administration.

Set the differences down that firmly and then ask what survives them, because what survives is the point. The same conversion of a relation into a thing so that ground could be granted. The same floor of imported and rented armed men beneath it. The same extraction sorted by caste, falling on the population with the least standing in the prior order. The same coercion, differently instrumented, applied to the same fields. The same story told to whoever was paying. **The Caribbean and the Shebelle are not the same case, and the structure came through the difference intact.**

Two further divergences have no parallel in the series at all, and they are the real singularities of the case.

The first is that the extraction ran backwards. The extraction and the coordination established it from the money and from the men: the surplus did not come out of Somalia, because there was none; it came from Italian taxpayers and, after 1935, Italian consumers, and it went to some hundred and fifty concessionaires, a shipping interest and a monopoly board. **Somalia is the series' first case of a colony that functioned as the medium of a domestic transfer rather than as a source of one.**

The second is that the metropole came back. Britain held the territory for nine years, could not decide, and in November 1949 the United Nations placed it under Italian trusteeship for ten years with a fixed terminal date. No other defeated empire was handed back a colony by the organisation that had taken it.

What the case returns to the pattern

A refinement has been proposed at the close of every module, which is more than any one case should produce, so the honest thing is to say which are load-bearing and which are confirmations wearing a contribution's clothes. A confirmation stated as a confirmation is worth more than a contribution stated as one.

Six stand as genuinely new.

One — the default and the payroll, and the diagnostic that separates them. The coordination and the collapse together. Every link in the Italian Somali chain benefited from the arrangement and would have been worse off without it, which satisfies the description of a default completely — and the order still had none, because every position in it was funded from Rome. The distinction is between a benefit *sourced from the arrangement* — land held under it, revenue collected within it, an office a man's sons will inherit — and a benefit that is a transfer from a single distant purse. The two are indistinguishable while the money flows. They separate on one test: **a default fractures at a seam; a payroll evaporates uniformly.** At Jelib in February 1941 thirty thousand men were killed, captured *or dispersed in the bush*, and Mogadishu was taken unopposed by a brigade that had been driving for three days. The operational instruction is to audit not whether each link benefits but where each link's benefit is sourced, and to count the positions whose income would survive the metropole stopping next year: a thousand chiefs in Buganda, thirty emirates in Sokoto, approximately nobody in Somalia.

Two — where the extraction does not balance, find the metropolitan constituency. A ledger can run backward in a surplus-poor settler colony; that much is familiar. Somalia is a third form: not a settler colony, not a profitable extractive one, but a mechanism for moving money from Italian taxpayers and consumers to a small class of Italian concessionaires, using Somali land, water and compelled labour as the necessary medium. Look for three instruments, all of them metropolitan legislation and none of them visible in any colonial export table: a budget subsidy, a protective tariff, a marketing monopoly. And the diagnostic that follows: **an extraction sustained by metropolitan transfer survives the loss of the colony**, because its constituency is at home. The Somali banana monopoly outlived Italian sovereignty by two decades and died of a corruption trial in Rome in 1964.

Three — the robe is identifiable bibliographically, and the tell is the ratio. Reconstructing the doctrine returns nothing where an order never preached. Ask instead which parts of a colonial administration's documentary output were transmitted beyond the colony, to whom, on what schedule and under what obligation. In Italian Somalia the whole legislative record from 1892 to 1908 was promulgated by posting on office walls and printed for the first time in a ministry handbook in 1912 — **except** the slavery measures, communicated annually to a special office at Brussels under Article LXXXII of the General Act and published there for seventeen states. One category of document had a foreign readership. Everything else had a wall. This gives the publication-as-tell a mechanism: the readership of a document, not its content, marks the robe.

Four — residue accretes only where the beneficiary can defend the deposit. Liberties are the residue of factional bargains struck above the heads of those who inherit them, and the deposits are supposed to accumulate. Somalia contains one clean instance of the mechanism working — an abolitionist society with a subscription list unseating a chartered company in 1903–05 — and produces no accumulation at all, because the deposit landed on freed slaves who had no land, no arms, no literacy, no institution and no standing, and who could not hold it. **A concession won by a strong faction on behalf of a weak one is a favour with an expiry date.** The ratchet is not in the writing-down; it is in the recipient. With a corollary: liberties drafted as prohibitions of named practices erode by substitution, and liberties drafted as grants of standing do not.

Five — a settlement fiction is an option, written early and exercised late. The usual reading is that which fiction a conqueror reaches for tells you what he wanted. In March

1895 a trading company that wanted customs receipts, had no settlers and no agricultural programme, declared that all uncultivated land without an ascertained owner belonged to the Kingdom of Italy — and the clause lay unused for twenty-five years until a Fascist state seated Piedmontese squadristi on an irrigated banana district without needing to pass anything new. Date the drafting and the exercise separately. **A vacancy clause drafted broader than its author's use for it is the tell of a conqueror who does not yet know what the colony is for**, and its existence makes the later taking legally frictionless.

Six — run the metabolic test twice. The instrument measures mass death at the moment of collapse and returns a near-zero for Italian Somalia in 1941, which is correct and misleading. An order can leave a population no more dependent than it found it while stripping it of title, standing and the arrangements by which it used to survive a bad year — and the bill then falls at the successor's first crisis and is attributed to the successor. Test at the collapse for coordination destroyed and at the next major shock for vulnerability installed.

And a shorter list, real but secondary: that the receipt is not the floor, and a metropole reads the receipt; that a colonial floor's chronology is often set on the metropole's other frontier, Adwa having done more to shape the Somali floor than any Somali action; that the fiction available to a conqueror is constrained by what the prior tenure makes fakeable, so that recognition was structurally unavailable in a country with no estates; that the naturalisation statute states in the coloniser's own words what formation was understood to accomplish, so that the school system's ceiling becomes legible as its deliberate complement; that formation-as-qualification is unstable and orders under pressure replace it with descent; that the medium-of-payment mechanism has a legibility precondition; that a compliance regime specifies the space practice will migrate into; that metropolitan attention converts to action most readily when the fault sits in a delegate the state can disown; that a colony's plurality is downstream of the metropole's and can be extinguished at the source without any colonial act; that a colonial collapse should be dated at the metropolitan crack; and that an unbuilt counting instrument is a line in the accounting rather than a limitation on it.

And what it only confirms, stated as confirmation. That the floor comes first and is African, rented and imported. That formation withheld leaves the prior conquest's formation holding the field — and, the one addition, supplying the officers and an

emigration doctrine. That surveillance is the tell of a belief that never took, here in the literal form of a guard standing over a paid worker. That a settlement buying nobody is a wall. That the fiction is aimed at the people paying rather than the people governed. That structural change did not come from below: twelve years of Biimaal war and two of sultanate war changed the price and not the outcome, and the order ended when a Nigerian brigade drove up the coast.

What could not be done

Four things, recorded because an account that hides its holes is not tested.

The quantitative side of the extraction is missing. There are no wage rates, no labour-force totals, no hours, no count of the compelled. The extraction can show the mechanism and the crop and cannot price the labour, and the accounting rests on a column of figures every one of which was written by an Italian.

Five sources that would have changed the account were not read: Cassanelli on the ending of slavery in Italian Somalia, the foundational text, used at third hand through three separate authors; Podestà on colonial economics, on whose absence the whole money argument rests exposed; Urbano's article in full; Mancuso on the interaction of customary, Islamic and colonial law, which may well correct the account of jurisdiction; and Eno on plantation slavery in the south, which corrects the opening landscape.

The opening landscape overstates, and the narrower formulation supersedes it. It asserts that Italy found servile labour in the river valleys but no plantation system, because the clan land regime prevented estates from forming, and it builds on that a claim that Italy constructed the plantation the prior order had prevented. Eno's position, and the recent literature citing it, is that the fifty thousand enslaved people brought from south-east Africa in the nineteenth century came primarily to work Somali-run agricultural plantations. Both are partly right — no alienable land and therefore no assemblable merchant estate, which is Cassanelli's point, together with substantial servile agricultural production under lineage control, which is Eno's — and so **the landscape's headline claim fails.** What survives is narrower: Italy did not create servile agriculture in those valleys; it abolished the legal form that production had taken, dispossessed the lineages that had controlled it, and reconstituted it under Italian title with the compulsion moved from ownership to residence.

And the most important claim in the accounting is the least verified: that the 1895 public-domain declaration underlies the land law of the independent state, and therefore that the thing which naturalised in Somalia was not the conqueror's story but one clause of his property law. It rests on Guadagni, whose later work on Somali land law remains unread.

The case for the whole enterprise, at full strength

Now the counter-position, stated as its strongest advocate would state it, and stated better than the apologetic literature states it, because that literature spends its energy on denial and the real case does not need any.

Italy came to a coast where an Omani-Arab sultanate had grown rich selling human beings, where the British navy had spent seventy years closing the traffic down, and where enslaved people brought up from the Mrima and taken in the wars of the interior worked the grain and sesame of the river valleys for masters who regarded them as a form of wealth. It joined the international instrument against that trade because admission to the society of powers required it, and then it **actually suppressed the trade** — prohibited every transaction in persons in 1903, freed thirteen years of children at a stroke, gave every slave the right to redeem himself at a price fixed by an official rather than a master and the right to keep what he earned, and fought a twelve-year war against the men whose economy that broke. It reported the suppression annually to Brussels for two decades and its returns were accurate. When the chartered company holding the colony was found complicit in the traffic it was there to suppress, the Italian state took the colony away from it and paid a hundred and forty-four thousand pounds for the privilege.

It then built things that had never existed in the Horn: the first modern irrigation works, a barrage across the Shebelle finished in twenty-five months, seven hundred and sixty kilometres of canal, a railway, a deep-water port, a road nearly to Addis Ababa, the largest salt works in the world at Hafun with a town for five thousand people and twenty-four kilometres of ropeway, and a capital city with a hospital, a museum, a power station and a plan. It ended, in the territory it held, the raiding that had been the ordinary condition of the frontier, and it disarmed a region that had been arming itself for a century.

It took a country that had never had a state — no borders, no capital, no single authority, no written language, no revenue system, no army — and gave it the administrative shape

of one, so that when Somalis came to make a republic there was a territory in which to make it and an apparatus with which to begin.

And then, alone among the defeated empires of the Second World War, it went back. Not as a conqueror: under a United Nations mandate, at its own expense, supervised, with a terminal date it did not set. It presided over the first elections Somalis ever held, in which the Somali Youth League took a hundred and forty-one of a hundred and ninety-five municipal seats in 1954 and formed a government in 1956. And on 1 July 1960 it handed over sovereignty **on the appointed day**, while the British were still administering their Somaliland, the Ethiopians were absorbing the Ogaden and the French would hold Djibouti for another seventeen years.

Whatever came afterwards in Somalia — the dictatorship, the wars, the famine of 1992, the state's disappearance — came thirty years and more after the last Italian administrator left, and was done by Somalis to Somalis.

That is the case. Every clause of it is true, and the evidence for most of it has appeared in the preceding modules.

The arithmetic beside it

Set the ledger next to each clause and leave the sum where it belongs.

On the abolition. The Sultan of Zanzibar decreed the abolition of the traffic through the Benadir and Kismayo in January 1876, twenty-seven years before Governor Dulio, and the Italian Ministry of Colonies printed his decree in 1912 as a footnote beneath its own. The ordinance of 2 March 1903 did not abolish slavery: its seventh clause left existing slaves in servitude and made them heritable by the children of free wives. The people it freed were, within a decade, being directed onto Italian plantations by the Resident of the Gosha District, watched by guards because otherwise they left, with flight from the estates classified by the administration as vagrancy and named by it as a principal cause of the labour shortage. In the Juba districts women and girls were married under compulsion on condition of working the settlers' farms for a term of years. Italy ratified the International Labour Organisation's convention against forced labour in June 1934 and the following year its Somali colonate contract was commended at an international conference in Paris. The compulsion had been moved out of the law of persons and into the law of place, and

both the instrument of 1890 and the instrument of 1930 were built to inspect the law of persons.

On the works. The barrage at Genale, the canals, the railway, the port and the road were built with a hundred and ten million lire a year of Italian taxpayers' money in the mid-1920s, on land declared public domain by a company by-law of 1895 written to secure customs receipts, and worked by labour that had to be guarded. The water taken above the barrage was water not arriving below it. The colony never paid for itself in fifty-two years. Its principal export could be sold only inside a legal monopoly created in December 1935 to close the Italian market against competitors, and Italian consumers paid the difference. Of the forty-five to fifty thousand hectares granted in concession, four thousand five hundred were under the flagship crop at its peak. The concessions at Genale were distributed to the Piedmontese Fascist associates of the governor who built the barrage — a *quadrumvir* of the March on Rome sent to Somalia because Mussolini wanted him out of Italy, whose problem the works answered and whose successor abandoned his religious policy within three years.

On the shape of a state. Somali had no official written form until 1972, eleven years after independence; a shaykh at Brava had devised one for religious verse in the 1890s. Somalis were barred from any schooling above the third elementary year, on the stated ground that three years sufficed for the manual work the native labour force was destined for. No Somali could become an Italian citizen in any circumstance, expressly including thirty years' service in the colonial army; the one statutory route, a perfectly Italian education, was written into law in 1933 and replaced by descent between 1936 and 1940. There was no representative body, no press in the language of the governed, no Somali standing against the administration, and no political organisation of any kind — until twenty-seven months after the Italians left, when thirteen men founded a club in Mogadishu whose five objectives included obtaining a written form for their own language. The borders that defined the territory in which a republic could be made also divided the Somali-speaking peoples among five jurisdictions, and the unification of those five was the first item on that club's list.

On the return, and the appointed day. Italy came back because Britain did not want the territory and Italy did. The trusteeship administration was staffed largely from the personnel of the old Ministry of Colonial Affairs, including a former Fascist governor reappointed to the district he had governed before, and was widely regarded in Somalia as

a refuge from the reckoning at home. The men were the same men. What was different was the supervision and the date, and the date had been set by an organisation Italy had lost a war to. The Somali political organisations had pressed for a fixed terminal date themselves, and on 11 January 1948, when the Somali Youth League demonstrated before the Four Power Commission to show that it existed, somewhere between fourteen and twenty-four Somalis and about fifty-one Italians were killed in Mogadishu.

And on what came afterwards. The famine of 1991–92 killed between two and three hundred thousand people and fell on the inter-riverine breadbasket — on the Rahanweyn and Digil, the Shebelle and Gabwing peoples, and the Bantu of Gosha descent. Those are the same populations who under the settlement of 1895 held no registrable title to the ground they farmed, whose lineage authority over land allocation had been broken, whose labour had been administratively compelled for a generation, and who stood outside the genealogical order in which political standing in Somalia is reckoned. The men who caused that famine were Somali and the responsibility for it is theirs. The doctrine that untitled ground belongs to the state was written in March 1895, by a trading company with sixty-three armed men, over territory it did not control — and it outlived the company, the liberal state, the Fascist state, the empire, the British administration, the trusteeship, and the Republic.

A note on sources.

This closing introduces no new evidence. Every figure, quotation, date and finding in it is carried forward from the opening landscape and the twelve modules, with its provenance and its uncertainty stated there, and nothing is stated here more confidently than it was when it was established. The four cautions that most affect it are: that every casualty figure except the 1948 riot was produced by an Italian source; that the budget figures on which the money argument rests come from a single secondary article; that the survival of the 1895 public-domain doctrine into independent Somali law rests on unread work by Guadagni; and that the opening landscape's account of the pre-colonial river valleys overstates and is superseded by the narrower formulation set out above.

The comparative material — Eritrea, Kenya, Northern Nigeria, Buganda, Southern Rhodesia, Saint-Domingue, Jamaica, Algeria — is drawn from the completed studies in the series and not from fresh research, and the comparisons are best treated as claims about those studies rather than about the underlying histories.

The counter-position in the penultimate section is a construction assembled for the purpose. It is not quoted from any apologist and it is deliberately stronger than the apologetic literature, which spends itself denying the forced labour rather than making the case that survives the forced labour being granted. If it is not the strongest version available, the account is weaker for it.

Part of the collection Patterns of Power. Tested, never revealed.